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50TH
ANNIVERSARY**

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MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN
AND MORE!**

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**ISSUE
428**

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AND TETSUO... THE FEARLESS REPTILE GUARDIAN OF STARBURST HQ!

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 428!

50 years of **Star Trek**. That's half a century. It's a big deal for any brand or franchise, but for a science fiction television show that only originally limped to a third season on the back of a campaign from viewers, before being promptly cancelled, it's literally astonishing.

STARBURST may have a spiritual connection with **Star Wars**, but **Star Trek** is the property that has fed this hungry magazine constantly for nearly 40 years. **Star Trek** may occasionally get cancelled, but it never goes away. Constantly reinventing itself, generationally on the fly. My own interest in genre was fuelled very early on by catching the **Star Trek Animated Series** during the school holidays. I was *that* young that I never even realised that it was an actual live action series. There I was, six years old, and my Mum casually changed the TV channel. Suddenly,

Captain Kirk and his mates were real. I remember my Mum looking worried as I sat there transfixed, muttering "they're real..." It's hard to imagine, but with no Internet you were *allowed* to be a naïve six-year-old. As I grew up, **Star Trek** hit the movies. I really liked the hard sci-fi of **Star Trek: The Motion Picture** (I still think that was actually a cool title), but myself and my friends loved **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan**. Watching that at the Ritz Cinema in Stockport was like a rite of passage into full-blown geekdom. For a while it seemed **Star Trek** was secure,

but there was still something missing...

The return of **Star Trek** to its spiritual home on television did not go well at first. **Star Trek: The Next Generation** had it problems, but the appearance of the Borg in **The Best of Both Worlds** put Picard and co. right up there with the original crew in terms of affection. Then came my favourite **Star Trek** show – **Deep Space Nine**. **DS9** was a seven-year space opera that embraced its televisual roots. It was a down and dirty **Star Trek** with a rich tapestry of supporting characters. War engulfed the **Star Trek** Universe, and **DS9** was unflinching with this epic storyline.

Voyager and **Enterprise** each added to the mythos with some amazing Mirror Universe instalments, and more Borg!

This long stint back on TV came to an end eventually, but then along comes J. J. Abrams, rebooting the saga, and returning **Trek** to the big screen in a much more commercial package. With the big screen **Trek** in rude health, it was only a matter of time before the franchise made its way back to the medium where I believe **Trek** really belongs...

Star Trek: Discovery has us all intrigued. In the hands of Bryan Fuller (whose pedigree includes **DS9** episodes), **Trek** could be about to explode once more. The trailer has us picking apart details, such as the obvious part-Klingon design, and accompanying Klingon musical bars. To be certain, we will all be waiting for this one with deep anticipation.

Star Trek has also always been about the fans, and a shared sense of community. **Trek** managed to unite one of the first ever fan bases, and brought together so many people over these 50 years. I even met one of my best friends, Shauna Askew, at a **Star Trek** art exhibition. A spectacular girl who is the person that **STARBURST** (and me) would be lost (in space) without.

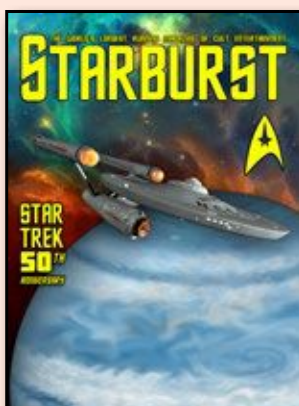
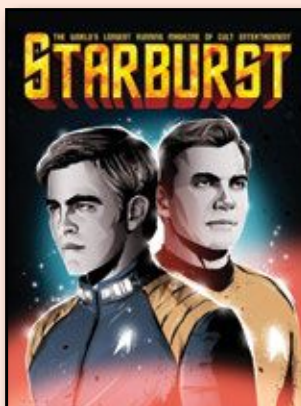
So how does **STARBURST** celebrate the truly landmark occasion of the 50th anniversary of **Star Trek**? Well the Newsstand and Collectors covers this month along with sporting **Trek** covers, also have a special one-off version of the **STARBURST** logo. It is our way of doffing our cap to the most influential show in the history of fantasy television. It is also our way of saying thanks for getting so many of us involved in sci-fi, and genre.

So, yeah. There is a fair bit of **Trek** in this issue, but **Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children**, **Sausage Party**, are both previewed, and we take a look back at the underrated **Battle Beyond The Stars**. All this and we still managed to squeeze in the rest of your favourites? We must have access to Federation technology.

Until next time, keep watching the weird and wonderful,



Jordan Royce
Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
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SQUAD GOALS

First of all, I have been buying your magazine on and off since your X-FILES cover feature to mark the event series (still can't decide if this was a good thing or bad...), and I must tell you after reading the new issue cover to cover 2 times over - consider me an every issue type of guy!

Anyway, the SUICIDE SQUAD article ranks as one of the best articles these peepers have ever well... peeped! The cover art was amazing! And the articles told this newcomer all things SQUAD, everything I need to know - and then some! Jared Leto has a lot to live up to given the Oscar-winning brilliance that was Heath Ledger!

And also please thank Alistair Davison for his amazing review of Alice by Christina Henry. I bought the book and its sequel and finished them in a evening!

As you can tell, I LOVE the magazine keep up the excellent work!

Owen Davies, via EMAIL

That's what we like to hear! Wait... you read the magazine cover to cover, TWICE! Now that is high praise indeed! You will be wearing the pages through at this rate (unless you bought our digital edition that is...).

SUICIDE SQUAD seems to be dividing opinions already, but turn to page 76 for our review of the film. Let us know your thoughts, Owen!

BEYOND A DISAPPOINTMENT

I don't know why I bothered. Why did I let my mates persuade me to go and see STAR TREK BEYOND? It was beyond a disappointment!

I said after STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS that I wouldn't watch any more of these new STAR TREK films. It's certainly no good for my blood pressure!

Each time, there are more and more things to be annoyed about, and it makes me just wish they would end it all and leave the past in the past. Or... the past in the future... or the future in the past! You get what I'm trying to say!

There seems to be a positive buzz for this new TV series they are making, but I still live in fear! As much as I love STAR TREK, I think it will be for the best if I just don't watch this new show, and live in denial. Am I crazy?! There must be others out there who feel this way?

Simon, via EMAIL

That is quite extreme! It would be a shame for you to miss out on potentially enjoyable TREK. We think it is in safe hands with Bryan Fuller, and remember that STAR TREK has always worked best when it has been given scope for the larger story arcs it needs, but only time will tell.

You could always stay tuned to STARBURST in future issues, and find out if we recommend it or not, to save you the heartache!

STAR

DECK AND COVER

This is quite a year for me with it being STAR TREK's 50th anniversary year, it also marks my 30th birthday year as well, which means when I was born in 1986, STAR TREK was still 20 years young with only THE ORIGINAL SERIES and 3 motion pictures available.

My mum told me she watched reruns of TOS on BBC2 when I was in her arms along with my older brother, over the years of birthdays and Christmas times myself and my brother had TREK related gifts of VHS tapes, colouring books, games etc. While growing up on THE NEXT GENERATION, DEEP SPACE NINE, and VOYAGER. Mondays was never a dull day for me in the late '90s, I watched DS9 and VOYAGER on VHS and new episodes on Sky 1 later that night, I watched VOYAGER, all the way to the bitter end of ENTERPRISE's cancellation in 2005, which left a very deep empty void, because it was on-going ever since I was born. Even great magazines like STARBURST, TV Zone, Cult times, SFX, Dreamwatch, and Starlog stopped printing STAR TREK-related articles, but when J.J. rebooted the movie franchise in 2009, I got excited again and again in 2013's INTO DARKNESS and now even more Now we have BEYOND and a new TV series on the way, it almost make me feel

like a kid again.

Plus my other favourites are LOST, STARGATE, SMALLVILLE, HEROES, SUPERGIRL, FLASH, ARROW, WALKING DEAD, THE 100, and DARK MATTER.

I've never been a big fan of DOCTOR WHO, MARVEL or any Fantasy, I know I hear you say 'WHAT' but that's just me. Keep up the great work on this amazing magazine.

Many thanks

Martin Revitt, via EMAIL

Wow! What a resplendent photo! It's like a tasty selection box! Congratulations, you have just won a 3-month sub to add to your collection! Thanks for sharing your photo with us, it's so nice to see all of the covers layed out like that.

We, too, are looking forward to STAR TREK DISCOVERY! Turn to page 40 for our article 'Wishful Thinking' about what we'd like to see in the new TREK series. We hope you enjoy this STAR TREK issue!

LETTER



Winner: KEV. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

STARBURST

NEXT ISSUE: 429 ON SALE FROM SEPTEMBER 16TH

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



DC

In some major, major news for Warner Bros' DC Extended Universe, Geoff Johns has been given the keys to the DCEU kingdom. Johns is a huge favourite of many comic book fans, with him responsible for writing legendary works such as **Green Lantern: Rebirth**, **Infinite Crisis**, **Blackest Night**, **The Flash: Rebirth**, **Flashpoint** and **Batman: Earth One**, not to mention having been involved with DC shows like **Smallville**, **Arrow**, and **The Flash**. Simply put, Johns has been responsible for some of the greatest comic book arcs of the past decade or more, with **Flashpoint**, in particular, proving to be one of the most revered comic book arcs in recent memory. Johns has previously been working as the Chief Creative Officer at DC Comics, and he's now been given the title of President of DC Entertainment, meaning he'll be overseeing the entire DCEU in a way much like what Joss Whedon did with the early days of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. With Zack Snyder having been the man previously tasked with overseeing the overall direction of the DCEU, it's believed that Warners weren't exactly ecstatic with how Snyder's **Man of Steel** and **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice** performed both critically and at the box office. Johns has already been working on the script of the upcoming Ben Affleck-helmed Batman solo movie, and going forward he'll be more hands-on with all of Warner Bros' DC movie output... and to us that is only a massive step in the right direction for the already troubled DCEU.

One person who Johns is particularly known for handling is the Flash, with his well-revered Scarlet Speedster tales seeing him actually bringing Barry Allen back from the dead after a 23-year absence. And on the topic of the Sultan of Speed, Rick Famuyiwa's **The Flash** has found its female lead. Now confirmed to appear opposite Ezra Miller's Barry is **Dope's** Kiersey Clemons as Iris West. Clemons, who worked on **Dope** with Famuyiwa, beat out competition from Lucy Boynton and Rita Ora for the Iris gig. The character of Iris is a longstanding love interest of Barry Allen, even becoming his wife at one point. Many are now more familiar with her for Candice Patton's portrayal of Iris West in The CW's **The Flash** TV show. Whilst the cinematic Flash will be next seen in November 2017's **Justice League**, there's no definite date presently set for his solo movie, although that film is expected to speed into cinemas in early 2018.

In some final DCEU news this month, James Wan's **Aquaman**

has brought in Will Beall to work on the film's screenplay. Beall, best known for the likes of **Castle** and **Gangster Squad**, was actually hired by Warner Bros back in 2014 to pen the screenplay for the King of Atlantis' solo film, although his involvement in the picture came to an end once Wan was hired last year. At that time, Wan brought in David Leslie Johnson, who he's recently worked with on **The Conjuring 2**, to develop the **Aquaman** script. This move of bringing Beall back into the fold will see him penning a screenplay for a new story put together by Wan and the aforementioned Geoff Johns. Starring Jason Momoa, **Aquaman** is currently set for a July 27, 2018 release, although the Marine Marvel will appear in Zack Snyder's **Justice League** before making waves of his own.

Moving from live-action movies and over to the animated DC realm, it's been confirmed that Matt Ryan will be voicing John Constantine in the upcoming **Justice League Dark** film. Ryan played Hellblazer in NBC's canned-after-one-season **Constantine** before also popping up as the character in an episode of **Arrow's** recent fourth season. Ryan's sarcastic, chain-smoking scouser will be joined in this animated adventure by **Grey's Anatomy's** Camilla Luddington as Zatanna, **Blue Bloods'** Nicholas Turturro as Deadman, voice talent veteran Roy Case as Jason Blood/Etrigan, and Jason O'Mara once again returning to voice Batman. In addition to these characters, Black Orchid and Swamp Thing will also feature as part of the movie's titular team, whilst there will be small cameo roles for Superman, Wonder Woman, and Green Lantern. The **Justice League Dark** team themselves were only introduced in 2011 as part of DC's ill-fated New 52 relaunch, with the more magical, supernatural names of the DC Universe coming together to battle threats that only they can take down. **Justice League Dark** will be released on Blu-ray, DVD, and digital later this year.

On the matter of DC animated outings, two other offerings have now been confirmed by Warner Bros Animation to join **Justice League Dark**, with **Teen Titans: The Judas Contract** and **Batman and Harley Quinn** now officially announced. **The Judas Contract** is an adaptation of the beloved 1984 story from Marv Wolfman and George Perez that saw the mysterious Terra introduced to the Teen Titans and also saw Dick Grayson first become Nightwing. As for **Batman and Harley Quinn**, that will be a completely new story focusing on the film's titular duo. **Teen Titans: The Judas Contract** is expected to arrive next Spring, with **Batman and Harley Quinn** arriving next Summer.

Now that **Supergirl** has moved from CBS to The CW for its second season, the series is wasting no time in bringing in some new faces. Following on from last month's addition of Tyler Hoechlin as Superman, the show has now moved to bring in **The Family's** Floriana Lima as National City cop Maggie Sawyer, **Cougar Town's** Ian Gomez as new CatCo Editor-in-Chief Snapper Carr, and **Merlin's** Katie McGrath as Lena Luthor, sister of that dodgy Lex fella. All three of these newbies are characters pulled directly from DC comic book lore. **Supergirl's** second season will premiere in the US on October 10th, with a UK return following shortly after that as the Maid of Might will now find herself existing in the same world as **Arrow**, **The Flash**, and DC's **Legends of Tomorrow**.

The aforementioned **Legends** show has made some moves ahead of its second season, too, with it now revealed that Season Two will see Rip Hunter's Legends team going up against a take on the infamous Legion of Doom. This take on that villainous team will be made up of Neal McDonough's Damien Darhk, Matt Letscher's Reverse-Flash, John Barrowman's Malcolm Merlyn, and Wentworth Miller's Captain Cold. But fear not, for Rip's

TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT



Whilst many rightfully see Optimus Prime as the face of the Transformers, there's a lot of love for Hot Rod, a cocky youthful Autobot who at one point steps up to become the leader of the good guys as Rodimus Prime once Optimus is out of the picture. Well, now comes word that Hot Rod will be a part of the upcoming **Transformers: The Last Knight**. Paramount Pictures confirmed the addition of Hot Rod to their cinematic Transformers franchise and even released a first look at this newcomer to Michael Bay's Robots-in-Disguise movie series. Hot Rod joins a roster for *The Last Knight* that includes Optimus Prime, Bumblebee, Drift, Sqweeks, Barricade, Onslaught and the hotly anticipated return of Megatron.

On the human front, the film will feature franchise veterans Mark Wahlberg, Josh Duhamel and Tyrese Gibson, plus new additions in the shape of Anthony Hopkins, Isabela Moner, Jerrod Carmichael, Laura Haddock and Santiago Cabrera.

To be directed by Michael Bay once more, **Transformers: The Last Knight** is currently shooting ahead of a June 23rd, 2017 release. AP

rag-tag team of Legends will have help to tackle this new threat in the form of the Justice Society of America. Whilst that team is still waiting for some of its members to be cast, **iZombie's** Matthew MacCaull has recently been confirmed to be playing the Henry Heywood version of Commander Steel as part of the JSA. In the team of classic heroes, he'll be joined by Patrick J. Adams' Rex Tyler/Hourman, and then the still-to-be-cast Doctor Mid-Nite, Obsidian, and Stargirl. October 13th is the date currently penciled in for the Season Two launch of **DC's Legends of Tomorrow** in the US.

And in some final, final, *final* DC news this month, **Gotham** has brought in Benedict Samuel as Jervis Tetch, aka Mad Hatter, ahead of its third season. As well as being the brother of **The Loved Ones'** Xavier Samuel, Benedict will be best known to genre fans for playing the creepy, long-haired member of The Wolves in the recent sixth season of **The Walking Dead**. This version of the Mad Hatter is being described as a talented hypnotist who is verging on the edge of insanity and who has an unrelenting desire to find his sister, Alice. **Gotham** returns to the air on September 19th. AP

MARVEL

Another month, another new addition to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This time out, after months of speculation, it's finally been confirmed that Brie Larson will indeed be playing Marvel Studios' and Disney's Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel. The

Room actor will debut as the character in the Russo Brothers' **Avengers: Infinity War** when that arrives on May 4th, 2018 before she then gets her own solo movie on March 8th, 2019. The character of Carol Danvers made her comic book bow in 1968 as a member of the US Air Force before later becoming Ms. Marvel in 1977 due to the fallout of a tangle with some explosive Kree technology. In 2012, Danvers was given a promotion from Ms. Marvel to Captain Marvel – a move that saw her become more of a focal point of the Marvel comic book realm. In recent times, she's currently front-and-centre butting heads with Tony Stark in Marvel's **Civil War II**. As for powers, Captain Marvel is able to project and absorb energy as well as having the usual superhuman strength and speed, not to mention the ability to fly.

And whilst on the topic of Anthony and Joe Russo's **Avengers: Infinity War**, the two-parter has been given a slight rejig. It had already been revealed that **Infinity War Part I** and **Part II** were to undergo name changes before they made their way to cinema screens, and now it's been revealed that the first of the Russos' Earth's Mightiest Heroes movies will now simply be called **Avengers: Infinity War**, dropping the **Part I** element altogether. As for the second of these films, that's now currently known merely as **Untitled Avengers Movie** by Marvel higher-ups. The current plan is still to shoot both films back-to-back, with, as mentioned, the first movie to be released on May 4th, 2018, while the second picture is marked in for a May 3rd, 2019 release.

One character who will be a big part of the whole **Avengers** franchise moving forward is Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther, someone who debuted in the Russos' **Captain America: Civil War** earlier this year. And now, after plenty of online chatter, the King of Wakanda's solo movie has had three confirmed new additions to its cast. Following on from previous reports, **Creed**, **Chronicle**, and **Fantastic Four's** Michael B. Jordan will be playing the villainous Erik Killmonger in the film, and he'll be joined by Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira. Oscar-winning **12 Years a Slave** actress Nyong'o will be playing one of Killmonger's agents, Kania, and Gurira, best known to genre fans as **The Walking Dead's** Michonne, is to play Okoye, one of the wives-in-training of T'Challa. Additionally, it's still also believed that Andy Serkis' Ulysses Klaw and Martin Freeman's Everett Ross will be a part of the movie, too. To be directed by **Creed's** Ryan Coogler, **Black Panther** is currently set for a February 16th, 2018 release.

Whilst there's some pretty huge things ahead for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Marvel's TV product has also had some big news this past month, namely that Ghost Rider will be a part of **Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** when that returns for its fourth season later this year. Nicolas Cage, of course, famously played the Spirit of Vengeance on the big screen in two movies, but this new incarnation of the character will be the Robbie Reyes version of Ghost Rider rather than the Johnny Blaze version that Cage played. **Matador's** Gabriel Luna has landed the gig, with him playing a comic book character who only actually appeared as recently as 2014. Possessed by the phenomenal power of the Spirit, this young LA mechanic initially uses his new ability to beat local gangs in street races before eventually channeling his power for the greater good. But that's not the only new addition for **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.**, for Jason O'Mara has been confirmed to play the organisation's new currently unnamed director. O'Mara is best known for live-action efforts such as **Life on Mars** and **Vegas**, although genre fans will likely recognise him for voicing Batman in animated outings such as **Justice League: War**, **Son of Batman**, **Justice League: Throne of Atlantis**, **Batman vs. Robin**, **Batman: Bad Blood**, and **Justice League vs. Teen Titans**. **Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** will premiere its fourth season on September 20th in the US, with a UK return to follow shortly after. A main plot point of the season will be seeing how the land lies in the aftermath of **Captain America: Civil War**.

Sticking with the realms of TV, and there's been some significant movement in what to expect from the small screen X-Men world. Previously we'd known that FOX was developing the villain-centric **Hellfire** show based around the Hellfire Club stable, whilst FX was working on **Legion**, a series focused on the troubled son of Charles Xavier. Well, whilst **Legion** is moving ahead as planned, dropping an impressive trailer at this year's San Diego Comic-Con, FOX's X-output has been changed up. The network is no longer developing **Hellfire**, but they're instead



looking at doing a currently untitled X-Men-based show that focuses on two regular parents who find out that their children have mutant abilities. This leads to the family going on the run from the government, in turn joining an underground movement of mutants who have to fight against the odds just to survive. ^{AP}

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

Following the excitement of **Star Wars Celebration**, the annual get-together for fans of the saga, we have a few nuggets of information about the first of the standalone movies that will fill the stopgap between the next instalments of the new trilogy.

As part of the new footage shown, there was a character who looked remarkably like the actor Jimmy Smits, and later he confirmed that it was indeed him, and that his character Bail Organa - the adoptive father of Princess Leia - will have a small cameo in **Rogue One**. Smits had played the role in both **Attack of the Clones** and **Revenge of the Sith**.

Director Gareth Edwards also revealed that Han Solo will definitely not be in his movie. Solo - who will be played by Alden Ehrenreich - will, of course, be the subject of the second Story film, due in 2018. **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story** is released on December 16th.

Meanwhile, there still might be a chance of expanding the **Star Wars** Universe on the small screen, following the cancellation of the planned **Underworld** series. ABC's Channing Dungey revealed that the network has held talks with Lucasfilm, stating that talks were ongoing but could still take a while to sort.

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on Horror Channel...

AUGUST 19TH - NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

The original granddaddy of all zombie movies, George A. Romero's stark and grim black-and-white shocker still packs a punch today and spawned a new era of walking corpses.

+++

AUGUST 27TH - LANDMINE GOES CLICK (2015)

Truly gruelling viewing as a man has to watch his mate's girlfriend being put through the most horrendous abuse. He's helpless to intervene since he has one foot on a landmine.

+++

AUGUST 29TH - CURTAIN (2015)

Don't you just hate it when your bathroom curtain keeps disappearing through a portal in the wall? Well that's just what happens in this unique sci-fi horror film that took FrightFest by storm last year.

+++

SEPTEMBER 1ST - MAY (2002)

Lucky McKee (**The Woman**) wrote and directed this amazing portrait of a woman with serious issues who takes to murder to create someone to be with after she struggles to connect with other people. We can't recommend this one highly enough.

+++

SEPTEMBER 3RD - THE DEVIL'S REJECTS (2005)

Rob Zombie's second film brings us the characters he introduced in **House of 1000 Corpses** in an even more fun and wild movie. Captain Spaulding (Sid Haig) is back!

+++

Two new series begin this month, with Season Four of **Hercules: The Legendary Journeys** bringing back Kevin Sorbo as the muscle-bound Greek hero, with occasional appearances from the likes of Bruce Campbell and Kevin Smith (no, not the Silent Bob one). There's a treat in store as we get a chance to relive the 1995 remake of **The Invaders**. Roy Thinnes returns as David Vincent, but the protagonist this time around is Scott Bakula as Nolan Wood. Richard Thomas (John-Boy in **The Waltons**) and Elizabeth Peña (**Jacob's Ladder**) also make appearances as the aliens once again take over the bodies of humans.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.



WIRELESS

Wireless, the web series from former **Primeval** star Andrew Lee Potts (see **Independents Day** in #418) is about to launch its second wave of episodes. The story follows cop Jacob Crow (Potts), assigned to a new project - an artificial intelligence called Unit White (Lucy Brown) that has an experimental chip allowing the computer to learn and experience emotion, something which brings its own complications along the way. Having the ability to access any wireless appliance certainly allows the low budget series lots of angles and the eight episodes already available (on [wirelessweb.london](http://www.wirelessweb.london)) have been fantastic. Shot entirely on GoPro cameras, and directed and edited by Potts, we're set to see even more excitement happening over the next few episodes, particularly with the introduction of some sinister new characters.

AND FINALLY...

After being teased with the prospect of another **Beetlejuice**, star Michael Keaton now believes the time has passed to make it happen. *"It's possible that ship has sailed,"* the **Birdman** star said, *"the only way to do it is to do it right. So much of it was improvised and so much was beautifully handmade by the artist that is Tim Burton. If you can't get close to that, you leave it alone."*

+++

Willem Dafoe will be voicing Ryuk the Shinigami in the Netflix exclusive live-action adaptation of **Death Note**. The popular manga has had a couple of forgotten movie versions, but the VOD version will have **You're Next/The Guest**'s Adam Wingard at the helm. The director has currently had a profile boost since his next film **The Woods** was revealed-actually be **Blair Witch**, a sequel to the overrated 1999 hit.

+++

Fans of Joe Johnston's 1991 caper **The Rocketeer** have had mixed feelings about the announcement that Disney will be relaunching the character as an African-American female pilot. Max Winkler and Matt Spicer have been drafted in to work on the screenplay, which is said to be set six years after the original, with the currently unnamed hero stepping up to the plate to stop jetpack technology being stolen and used against the USA. Currently entitled **The Rocketeers**, expect more details as the project develops.

+++

Filming has begun on sci-fi/horror film **The Recall**, which will star Wesley Snipes (**Blade**) and RJ Mitte (**Breaking Bad**). Set during a spate of alien abductions, it will focus on group of five friends on holiday at a remote lake house. Mauro Borrelli (**The Ghostmaker**) is directing and word has it that portions of the film will be shot in Virtual Reality and the whole movie made for the Barco Escape three-screen panoramic cinema format. We wait with bated breath for the inevitable straight-to-VOD release...

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THE FINAL FRONTIER A CELEBRATION

by Livvy Boote



AS ARGUABLY THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SCI-FI TV SERIES OF ALL TIME REACHES ITS GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY, WE LOOK BACK AT GENE RODDENBERRY'S ICONIC STAR TREK...



The 1960s was the decade that science fiction was reinvented. Before this time brought camp style and sexed up characters, sci-fi was something much more serious, solemn even. It was a genre evoked images of H. G. Wells' monsters invading from space, of Ray Bradbury's dystopian worlds, or the unspeakable horrors that crawled from the pages of H. P. Lovecraft's novels. Many such stories fall into what is commonly known as 'The Golden Age of Science Fiction'. It was what sci-fi was.

However, by the time the '60s rolled around, the genre had morphed into something more easily enjoyable. The gloomy grandeur of old sci-fi was replaced with catch phrases and silver spandex space suits. Our scientist protagonists became Barbarella. It became more... *fun*.

When *Star Trek* started hitting the screens, it wasn't immensely popular; however, it did create a very passionate and devoted fan base. *Star Trek* took the fun, lighthearted nature of series like *Lost in Space* and combined it with the intellectual essence of Golden Age sci-fi. It maintained the genre's urge to ask the big questions, without sacrificing a good sense of humour. This caught the eyes of quite a few sci-fi fans.

But *Star Trek* was not only unique to its predecessors because of its clever mixture of profundity and silliness, but also because of the influences of its particular epoch.

It was a decade that saw the continuation of the American economic boom, inspiring a hopeful outlook on the future; it saw civil rights movements, seeking racial and gender equality; there was new, exciting technology - colour television even - triggering a stream of new shows; and, of course, the moon landing. A symbol that mankind was beginning to take its first 'small step' into space exploration. It was a decade when economic, social, and technological advances began to germinate and blossom.

It's not surprising, then that at the middle of the '60s, *Star Trek* made its début, detailing the epic exploration of the hero Captain Kirk through the universe, with his trusty crew, showing a hopeful future for humanity. What is more surprising is its lack of popularity. One way to answer this is that it was ahead of its time, another is that the viewers were from older generations who did not care to watch what used to be considered a rather niche genre. But as time went on, especially after the explosion of sci-fi that followed *Star Wars*, people saw *Star Trek* for what it was: a thought provoking yet enjoyable masterpiece, offering a fascinating window into the issues of the 1960s.

Now, in the 21st century, how does a series like *Star Trek* seem in retrospect? There is much to be said for how dated it is. As we said, everything is very much a product of its time, and *Star Trek* is certainly no exception. The fashion choices of the aliens are more than questionable; how the





William Shatner

Character: James Tiberius Kirk (aka Jim)

Catch-Phrase: "Set phasers to stun"

Date of Birth: March 22nd, 1931

William Shatner was born in Montreal and raised in a Jewish family. He was trained in classical Shakespearean acting before appearing in *Star Trek*, which lends some explanation to his theatrical style. He and Nichelle Nichols famously shared the first interracial kiss on American television in *Plato's Stepchildren*.

Having been cast as the handsome hero, he was surprisingly overshadowed by the alluring mystery of his second-in-command, Mr Spock, who was considered by many more attractive.



Leonard Nimoy

Character: Mr Spock (aka 'Green-blooded Hobgoblin')

Catch-Phrase: "Live Long and Prosper"

Born: March 26th, 1931

Died: February 27th, 2015

Leonard Nimoy was born in Boston, MA and raised by a Jewish family. His Jewish upbringing, especially his visits to the local synagogue, inspired the famous Vulcan hand gesture which was accompanied with equally famous phrase 'Live Long and Prosper'. His cool, calm, and collected exterior and strikingly alien image became the symbol of *Star Trek*. Nimoy wrote several autobiographies about his role as Spock and the influence the character had on his life.

THE BRIDGE: ACTOR PROFILES



DeForest Kelley

Character: Doctor Leonard McCoy (aka Bones)

Catch-Phrase: "I'm a Doctor, not a-I!"

Born: January 20th, 1920

Died: June 11th, 1999

DeForest Kelley was born in Georgia. His unusual name is said to derive from Lee de Forest, the electronics engineer. His role as the gruff but loveable doctor on the USS Enterprise was infamous, and yet despite his recognition, his name never reached the title credits of the show alongside Shatner's and Nimoy's. He also suffered a lack of popularity compared to the handsome Kirk and Spock. However, the three of them were close friends until his death in 1999.

costume designers came up with sexy dungarees or hairy bikinis, we don't know. It is '60s fashion at its worst.

Then, of course, there are the sets. The problem with restoring old television shows or films is that you can see *everything* that's wrong with the set. The odd line dividing the screens, the very polystyrene-looking rocks that occasionally bounce when they fall down 'cliffs'. The fact that every alien planet seems to be filmed in exactly the same part of America - strange how both Capella IV and Ardana look like California...

The script and acting style are both rather dated, too. As a modern viewer, you sometimes feel like you're watching a play. At other times, Shatner overacts to the point that you're wondering if you're watching a weird, futuristic version of a Greek tragedy. The fight scenes are one of the funniest things about *Star Trek* - Kirk's shirt irrevocably ripping open as he launches himself sideways like a bowling ball at several living pins; delayed reaction times when extras get punched.

It's rather old-fashioned looking now. And yet, when this writer first watched it as a teenager, I

instantly fell in love with its campiness and '60s nuances. It was funny, endearing, and somehow made me adore the show even more.

Despite being now a little behind the times, *Star Trek* continues to be enjoyable and relevant in the 21st century. One of the things I have always personally loved about the show is how it approached sexuality. In a decade when cowboys were everywhere on TV, when shows about the military were popular, *Star Trek* offered an image of men and women working together in space, in a future when the sexes were equal and no one had gender roles enforced on them. Kirk was romantic and fell in love, and considered his female crew members equal - not traditionally masculine traits of the time. These days as we live under a patriarchy, women still being paid less than their male co-workers, *Star Trek's* portrayal of men and women working together remains inspiring and hopeful.

And then, of course, there was the idea that people of varying race and species should be able work together equally. Nichelle Nichols' character, Uhura, proved just that to an audience experiencing the affects of civil rights movements. Spock's



Walter Koenig

Character: Pavel Andreievich Chekov
Catch-Phrase: "That is a Russian invention"
Date of Birth: September 14th, 1936

Walter Koenig was born in Chicago, raised in a Russian Jewish family. He was 30 years old when he took on the role of Chekov, though he had already begun to suffer a receding hairline, hence the unfortunate bowl shaped comb-over 'Beatles' hairstyle. He served as best man at Takei's wedding in 2008. Since *Star Trek*, Koenig has continued to act and direct in mostly small, independent movies.



Nichelle Nichols

Character: Nyota Uhura
Catch-Phrase: "Hailing on all frequencies"
Date of Birth: December 28th, 1932

Nichelle Nichols was born in Chicago. Her debut as Uhura on *Star Trek* marked one of the first time a black actress had played a role other than a servant. She became a role model for black girls across America, offering an image of a black woman working on the bridge of a ship being treated equally. She inspired Whoopi Goldberg to take up a role in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and a whole generation of children of colour to strive for greatness. She has since worked for NASA and continued acting, recently appearing in the TV series *Renegades*.



James Doohan

Character: Montgomery Scott
Catch-Phrase: "I'm givin' 'er all she's got, Captain!"
Born: March 3rd, 1920
Died: July 20th, 2005

James Doohan was born in Vancouver. He served in the Second World War in the Royal Artillery, reaching the rank of lieutenant. Rumour has it that he lost his right middle finger on D-Day. He chose to adopt a Scottish accent for his character, naming him Montgomery Scott after his grandfather.



George Takei

Character: Hikaru Sulu
Catch-Phrase: "Warp speed, Captain!"
Date of Birth: April 20th, 1937

George was born Hasato Takei, in California. He began his acting career in 1950s, and ran into the issue of the low casting of Asian men. However, his role in *Star Trek* gave him the reception he deserved, eventually working alongside Koenig (Chekhov). The two characters worked side by side on the bridge in command gold, driving the ship. Since, Takei came out as gay and took on equal rights activism for the LGBT community. He is a well-loved celebrity with an especially humorous Facebook page.



character represented how many people of colour must have been feeling in the '60s - out of place, belonging nowhere, facing discrimination from their co-workers. His struggle with who he was as he faced this discrimination must have been an influence for thousands of people at the time, and remains so even now, as unfortunately, racism hasn't magically disappeared.

Spock is almost everyone's favourite character. He touched the hearts of thousands, nay millions, of people, regardless of who they were. The pointy-eared, logically-speaking alien practically became the image of *Star Trek* - when people mention the name, one of the first things to come to mind is Spock. He was something new, intriguing; an alien who was also half human, constantly facing a battle between his human emotions and his Vulcan heritage. His struggles made us as viewers sympathise with him and want to tell him that he could be whoever he wanted to be, that he didn't have to fit in; things that we have all been told ourselves at some point in our lives. And alongside the deep emotional turmoil that came with Spock, there was his infamous cold exterior, his abhorrence of anything illogical, his comically robotic personality. Everyone loved and respected him.



However, Kirk, the show's hero, has always fascinated me. Personally, as someone who has studied texts such as *The Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, I find Kirk's case to be a wonderful example of a classical hero. Unlike some of the macho protagonists of the popular shows of the time, Kirk was not always in a fight - he was also kind, children were attracted to his gentle nature. He was regularly broken hearted, one of his 'fatal flaws', in the terms of an ancient Greek hero. He was impulsive, yet intelligent. In other words, he wasn't perfect, a particularly sympathetic quality.

Star Trek's characters are probably what made the show become as immensely popular as time went by. Despite its failings (Season Three being especially dubious in quality) and its dated appearance, it still holds enormous appeal in its '60s aesthetic, in its thought-provoking morals, and its refreshingly complex characters. But, of course, it is important that we do not forget the most obvious element of *Star Trek* that everyone loved - its aliens. The show inspired sci-fi in later decades with its strange creatures - the Horta, the Gorn, and the Klingons. Balls of gas floating around, non-corporeal blinking lights with voices, child actors with adult voices - *Star Trek* thought outside of the box, amazing and frightened viewers with its aliens. In a time when TV was relatively new, and colour television *brand new*, it made an impression, and it still does.

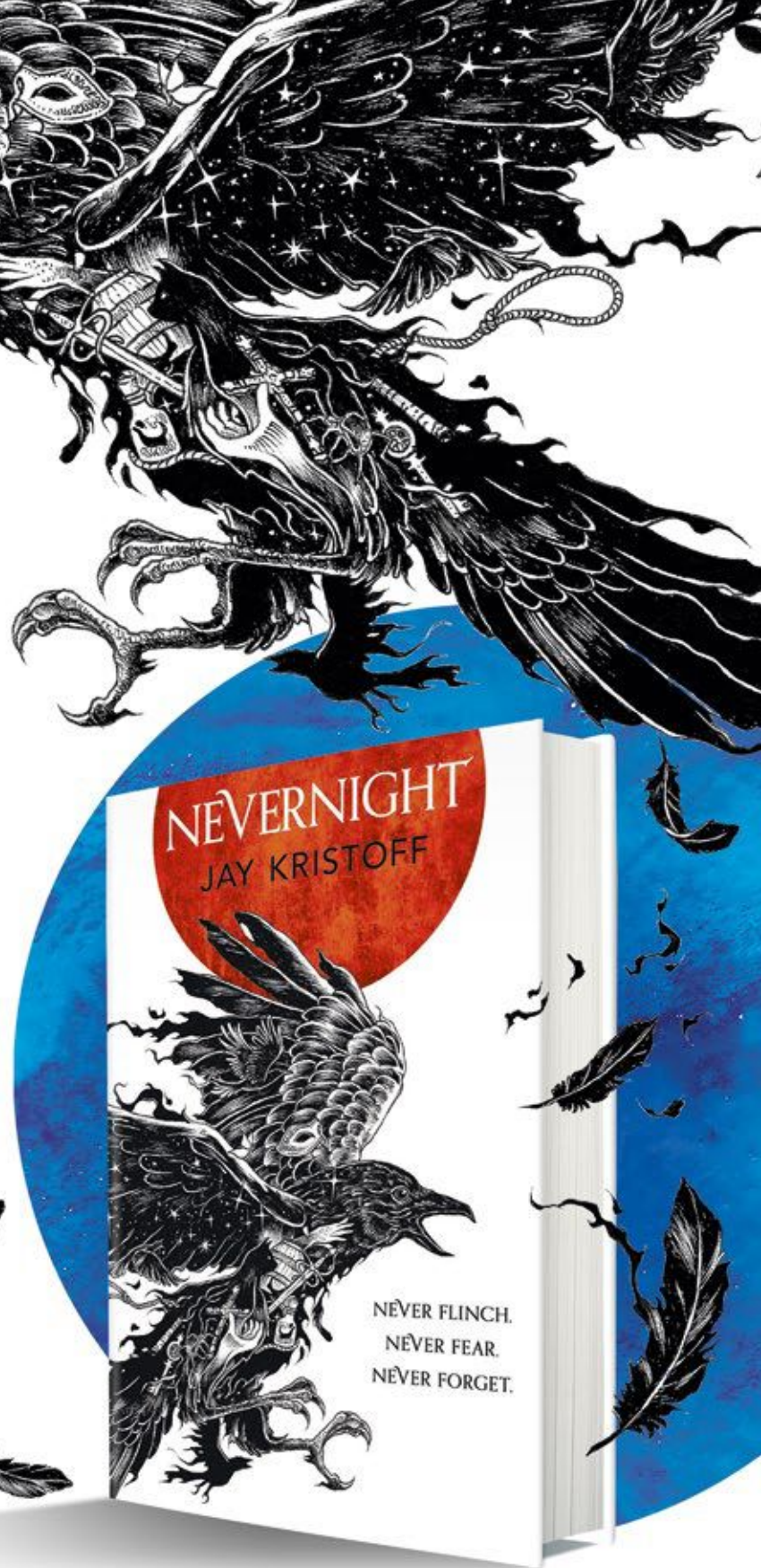


Star Trek: The Original Series has not always been considered influential. There was a time when it was unpopular. And yet it is clear - after its revival in the form of several spin-off series, movies, and then a reboot - that it is a show that has influenced countless generations of sci-fi and has well and truly made its mark in history.

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#NEVERNIGHT

TO SEEK OUT BRAVE NEW WORLDS:

An introduction to the world of STAR TREK

by Jennie Bailey



Star Trek (1966 – 1969)

Number of seasons: 3

Number of episodes: 79

Captain: James Tiberius Kirk
(William Shatner)

Ship: Starship Enterprise (NCC-1701)

Abbreviation: TOS (The Original Series)

Gene Roddenberry conceived the idea of a space Western that married the American desire to explore new frontiers with the space race between Russia and the US. Roddenberry's vision was to create a future where all faiths and ethnicities, human and alien, could live, co-operate, and explore in peace. **TOS** was where it all kicked off with Captain Kirk and company. Famous for a whole series of 'firsts' including the inclusion of a Russian crew member and the first televised interracial kiss, the main enemy throughout were the Klingons. Kirk is an affable rogue who is not afraid to go against Starfleet, the organisation maintained by the United Federation of Planets (a bit like an intergalactic United Nations), wearing his bravery - and pansexuality - on his sleeve: beware those who possess a pair of ovaries!

Beam Me In!

Where No Man Has Gone Before (1966, Season 1, Episode 1)

The first episode of **Trek**. Well, it was the second, but the pilot wasn't seen widely until 1988, but hey, that's a conversation for another time. We're introduced to the gang and the dynamic between Kirk and Spock is well set up here.



The Trouble with Tribbles (1967, Season 2, Episode 15)

Tribbles are little purring pom-poms of cuteness that reproduce faster than the randiest of rabbits. Brought on board by Lieutenant Uhura, the crew discover that the creatures are always hungry, expanding as they consume the ship's supplies.



Star Trek: The Animated Series (1973 - 1974)

Number of seasons: 2

Number of episodes: 22

Abbreviation: TAS



Notable as the first attempt at reviving **Star Trek**, and continuing the story from **TOS** with most of the same crew, **TAS** benefited from being able to use animation to move beyond the limitations of sound stages and polystyrene rocks. However, budgets were tight, the quality of animation was poor, and despite many **TOS** actors appearing, the voice acting was so wooden you could smell the creosote. Gene Roddenberry was sufficiently embarrassed that he later explicitly 'de-canonised' events in **TAS**.

Beam Me In!

Yesteryear (1973, Season 1, Episode 2)

Spock goes back in time to guide his younger self and protect the existence of his original timeline. One of the few, possibly only, episodes of **TAS** where the script might have made a decent episode in other **Star Trek** series.



Don't know Klingons from Tribbles? Fear not! We're here to help you identify different STAR TREK series and episodes where you can jump into the much-loved Franchise. Soon you'll be Star Trekkin' across the Universe.



Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987 - 1994)

Number of seasons: 7

Number of episodes: 176

Captain: Jean-Luc Picard
(Patrick Stewart)

Ship: Starship Enterprise (NCC-1701-D)

Abbreviation: TNG

This opened eighteen years after the last episode of TOS aired and after several highly successful films featuring TOS crew proved the public's desire for more Trek. That opening moment with Patrick Stewart's sonorous tones over the familiar arpeggio! That upbeat theme tune!

We're a century into the future and the Federation has made peace with the Klingons, one of whom, Worf, is a key crew member. Picard is played with Shakespearean aplomb by Stewart, and this Captain suffers no fools. The Borg are the main 'big bad' throughout the series, a hive-mind collective driven to assimilate all species via nanotech robots that take over their host. Resistance is futile!

Beam Me In!

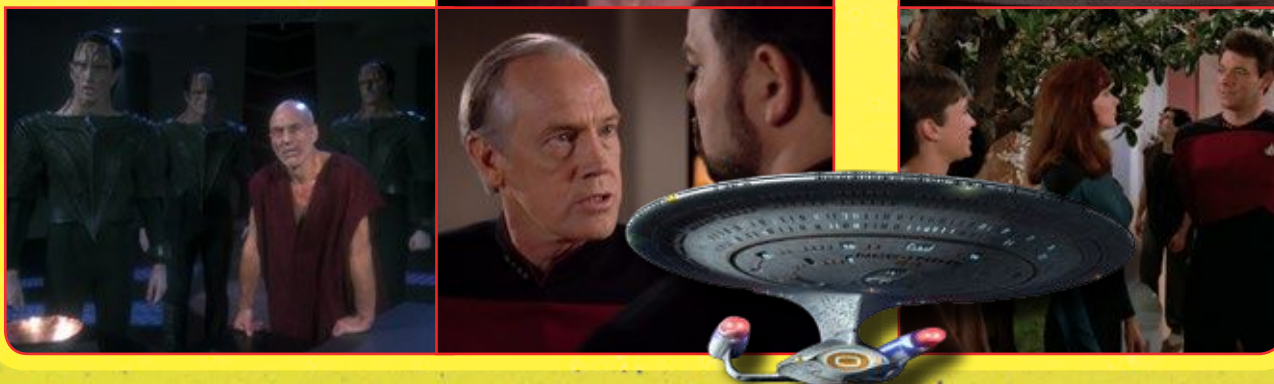
Encounter at Farpoint (1987, Season 1, Episode 1)

The series premiere where Picard takes command of the shiny new USS Enterprise-D. The crew encounter Q, a seemingly omnipotent, hyper-intelligent, and generally annoying but dangerous alien entity from the Q Continuum. It's their first but not last encounter with Q...



Chain of Command (1992, Season 6, Episodes 10 and 11)

It cannot be denied: this two-parter is awesome. Picard, his first officer William Riker, and Dr. Beverly Crusher are reassigned from the Enterprise on a secret mission. The mission fails and Picard is captured by the Cardassians (no, not those Kardashians *shudder*). Stewart puts in a King Lear-worthy performance. There. Are. Four. Lights.



Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (1993 - 1999)

Number of seasons: 7

Number of episodes: 173

Commander (later Captain):
Benjamin Lafayette Sisko
(Avery Brooks)

Space Station: Deep Space Nine

Abbreviation: DS9

Following the success of **TNG**, it seemed like people had an unlimited appetite for the Star Trek Universe. Capitalising on this, **DS9** was created, the first series to be developed after Gene Roddenberry's death in 1991. Located next to a wormhole connecting different quadrants of the galaxy, Deep Space Nine is both giant marketplace and strategic defence outpost. Setting the action on a space station allowed viewers to see how 24th Century interstellar politics functions, and also allowed the development of sophisticated story arcs, far beyond the alien-of-the-week storylines common to **TOS** and **TNG**. Controversy raged at the time about how similar the setup was to that of **Babylon 5**, which premiered at almost the same time and whose early development had been known to Paramount Studios, but **DS9** soon found its own distinctive take on space station life.



Beam Me In!

Emissary (1993, Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2)

Setting up the story that eventually leads to the Dominion war, Sisko and crew occupy a surrendered Cardassian mining station located near the recently liberated planet Bajor.



Trials and Tribble-ations (1996, Season 5, episode 6)

A fun crossover episode where Sisko and crew are digitally re-inserted into **TOS** episode *The Trouble with Tribbles*. Their mission: to thwart an assassination attempt on Captain Kirk and to seek out, somewhere in the millions of reproducing furballs, a bomb disguised as fluff.



Star Trek: Voyager (1995 - 2001)



Number of seasons: 7

Number of episodes: 168

Captain: Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew)

Ship: USS Voyager

Abbreviation: VOY

Set contemporaneously with DS9, **Star Trek: Voyager** follows the crew of the USS Voyager, stranded 70,000 light years from Earth by a chance encounter with a powerful alien. At the helm is Captain Kathryn Janeway, the first female captain of a **Star Trek** series. Kate Mulgrew's portrayal of Janeway as a strong, intelligent role model gained plaudits.

While still successful, the writers clearly found a return to alien-of-the-week stories difficult, and **VOY** suffers from more 'filler' episodes and 'magic technology' than previous series, particularly towards the end of the run. However, it remains a fun romp through parts of the galaxy far, far away.

Beam Me In!

Caretaker (1995, Season 1, Episode 1)

This episode sets up the main storyline for the series; the newly commissioned Voyager and crew are flung into the Delta Quadrant by the Caretaker, a powerful entity. They then set a course for home. A mere 75 years away.



Deadlock (1996, Season 2, Episode 21)

After exiting a nebula, a space-time rift occurs creating a duplicate of Voyager. With only enough antimatter supplies to keep one of the starships going, this presents a *what if* premise in which Janeway has to make the tough decision as to which Voyager will survive.



Star Trek: Enterprise (2001 - 2005)

Number of seasons: 4

Number of episodes: 97

Captain: Jonathan Archer (Scott Bakula)

Ship: Enterprise NX-01

Abbreviation: ENT

Set before TAS, following the exploits of the first starship to bear the name Enterprise, in the years leading up to the creation of the Federation. The idea behind it being a 'prequel' was to get away from Voyager's reliance on 'deus ex machina' technology and 'Treknobabble', and return to **Star Trek**'s roots as 'Wagon Train to the Stars'. As with much post-9/11 science fiction, **Enterprise** took a moodier, darker turn; a reflection of an America ill at ease with itself and wondering what its role in the universe was.

Despite a good cast and setup, and many good scripts, it was received poorly, and was cancelled in 2005 after only four seasons, the shortest run of any **Star Trek** since **TAS**. Some say this was due primarily to the soft rock theme tune, which divides fans to this day.

Beam Me In!

Broken Bow (2001, Season 1, Episode 1)

Earth's first starship, Enterprise, is launched into space. Its mission? To boldly return a Klingon back to his home planet. It's quite exciting learning about the genesis of the transporter technology and to see how it all began. (The phase pistols look like an office stapler crossed with a hairdryer!)



In a Mirror, Darkly (2005, Season 4, Episodes 18 and 19)

This stand out two-parter kicks off with what would have happened if events of **Star Trek: First Contact** had turned out VERY differently. It occurs in a 'mirror' universe where opposites are flipped; the crew of Enterprise are cruel and manipulative and the Enterprise becomes the ominous Imperial Space Ship Enterprise NX-01 battlecruiser.





What They're Made Of:

A SALUTE TO THE WOMEN OF STAR TREK

BY KATE FATHERS



STARBURST takes a look at the groundbreaking females of the franchise...

When it comes to our cultural memory, *Star Trek's* women are often eclipsed by their male cohorts. It's understandable; it took twenty-nine years to get a woman in a starship's captain's chair, and while it is technically an ensemble show, it's still very much about the captain. The women were supporting characters - love interests, villains and intelligent guest stars. They were ephemeral. They weren't the lynchpin of an entire series.

Except that none of that is true.

In 1964, when the idea that later became *Star Trek* was first knocking around, Gene Roddenberry wanted one of the main crew to be a woman. A strong woman. The kind

of woman that existed then and still would in the twenty-third century. When *The Cage* was written, she became Number One, Captain Pike's cool and professional first officer played by Majel Barrett. She was rational, and she was intelligent, and she gave off the impression that if something happened to the captain, everything would be fine because she would save the day. Beside her were the capable Yeoman Colt (Laurel Goodwin), and Vina (Susan Oliver), who just wanted her own life, and together they showed audiences some of the diversity of character women could display.

Legend has it that NBC was uncomfortable with this kind of character,

and demanded Number One's removal for the second pilot. Other sources say that they loved a strong woman, but objected to the actress, and the role was scrapped instead of recast. Whatever the reason, by the time the second pilot was shot, Number One was gone, her personality and rank were given to Spock, and while there were other female characters, the concern of the new show was clear: to explore where no *man* had gone before.

While *Star Trek* fell into an orbit around Kirk and Spock and, later, McCoy, that did not mean women were completely sidelined. They were diligently working in the background or roundhouse kicking



bad guys an inch from the camera; they were on the bridge, in the sickbay, and in engineering. Guest characters may have been stereotyped as love interests, but they were scientists and diplomats and ships' commanders—women of position and intelligence, and who weren't at all diminished by wanting to kiss Captain Kirk. The Enterprise itself had two recurring women: Lieutenant Uhura (Nichelle Nichols) and Nurse Christine Chapel (Majel Barrett). They didn't get many lines, and the attention paid to their backgrounds and development was as tiny as their skirts, but they still managed to do so much with what they were given. They grabbed on to every piece of dialogue and every moment of screen time, and they pushed, punched, and pulled until they were certain viewers would be able to see three-dimensional people there. Uhura and Chapel were women of passion, integrity, and humour; they had ambition, and they supported each other, unnoticed, behind the backs of their male colleagues. Even Yeoman Janice Rand (Grace Lee Whitney), only on *Star Trek* for a single

season, was bright and bold and resourceful, and so much more than fandom has given her credit for.

Star Trek was cancelled in 1969, and during the four years before it was revived as a Saturday morning cartoon, not only were women organising the first *Star Trek* conventions, but second wave feminism continued to make strides. Perhaps that's why *The Lorelei Signal* was written, an Animated series episode that saw Uhura in the Captain's chair, Chapel as Chief Medical Officer, and a retinue of women rescuing the captive men. It's *Star Trek*'s first look at a female captain, and a wonderful salute to the agency women are capable of exercising, and if Uhura had decided to make her new rank permanent, likely very few would have objected. The animated series also introduced M'Ress, *Star Trek*'s first female alien crewman.

In 1979, *Star Trek* tried its hand at movies, and women were deeply embedded in their stories. There were new crew and old, mothers and protégées; villains, scientists,

and diplomats. All of them were passionate, and none of them were sexualised, and without them every plot would have fallen apart. Imagine *The Wrath of Khan* without Carol Marcus (Bibi Besch) playing god and succeeding? Imagine *The Voyage Home* without Gillian Taylor (Catherine Hicks), with her enthusiasm and willingness to help? Or *The Undiscovered Country* without Valeris (Kim Cattrall) and her toxic beliefs? Uhura was the only recurring female character in the first six films, but she was never diminished to build up the guest women. They were never put in competition. They stood on their own, and worked together, and while there could have been more camaraderie it was enough, at the time, that they were on equal footing.

The success of the films paved the way for a new series: *The Next Generation*. It was slicker than its predecessor, with a bigger ship and well-tailored uniforms, but it still sought the same diversity. With Roddenberry advising, it still





strove to give viewers a future where there was genuine equality. Of course, it wasn't perfect; women's roles were larger but still eclipsed by the number and richness of men's stories. Growing pains and the consequent job dissatisfaction saw the three main women reduced to two. It made missteps, but it also gave women episodes completely devoted to them. It made two women friends, and put them front-and-centre on the screen. It told viewers why Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) became a doctor, and introduced them to Deanna Troi's (Marina Sirtis) mother, and allowed Guinan (Whoopi Goldberg) to be a wonderful, Trelane-like mystery. These were women who had complete lives that didn't need to be inferred. And for every triumph and every scar, you loved them all the more because you were able to see it. Because you could live your lives alongside them. So many doctors, and counsellors, and police officers were made because of that.

It's on that strong foundation that **Deep Space Nine** was built. After twenty-seven years, there was once again a female first officer in the form of Kira Nerys (Nana Visitor), and instead of being ousted she rose through the ranks from major to commander. Jadzia Dax (Terry Farrell) rounded out the well-established tradition of two primary female characters, but there was nothing traditional about her. For the first time, both women were aliens. They had complicated backstories and got season-spanning arcs. They fought, they lusted, they learned, and they smashed the nurturing role many female characters (even temporarily) fell in to. In **Deep Space Nine**, the universe was changing, becoming more complex and nuanced, and embodying that change were Kira and Dax. They challenged ideas, and their crewmates, and the viewer, and were arguably the most memorable parts of the series. Guest roles were also stronger for women, and female friendships were pushed further into the forefront. It wasn't just that women were friends; those friendships now impacted the plot. Those relationships affected other characters. The closeness only Kirk and Spock had been allowed was finally given to women, and it was wonderful. It was very much like family. And it was almost everything fans wanted.

All of this culminated in **Voyager**. In 1995, while **Deep Space Nine** was still airing, UPN commissioned another **Star Trek** series to pick up where its predecessor was leaving off. They set it back on a starship (although for the first time one not named Enterprise), and cut it off from Starfleet, and to make it even more unique they settled on one clear vision: the ship's captain and de facto lead would be a woman, for the first time in almost thirty years. Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) was everything fans had been waiting for. She didn't fall in to a stereotype or act compensatory; she didn't need to be rescued by the male crew. She was a woman doing a job, and doing it well, while having everything stacked against her. Unlike the captains who came before, Janeway's crew was not a cohesive unit. They had vastly differing ideologies, and a planet's worth of baggage, and it was Janeway's job to pull them together and get them home. And



she did, with a single-minded strength. She made them friends. She made them family. Which is more than any other series was able to do.

At the heart of this family were women. Before **Voyager**, women in **Star Trek** didn't support each other as mentors and surrogate daughters. For relationships like that, viewers had to turn to stories in fanzines and on fanfiction websites, creating for themselves the kind of lives women actually lived. But then there was B'Elanna Torres (Roxann Dawson), torn over her dual heritage. Then there was Kes (Jennifer Lien), striking out on her own. There was Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan), disconnected from others but striving for home and understanding. These were bold women, and messed up women; women who cared for each other and loved each other and helped each other grow. They forged bonds with each other, and with their captain that were closer than anything seen before and suddenly viewers didn't have to imagine anymore. It took thirty years, but women no longer had to fight for screen time. They didn't have to own every syllable of dialogue. They were given depth gladly, because they deserved it just as much as men. This was a future women could see themselves in, almost completely. This was a future where women finally felt included.

A few months after **Voyager** ended, yet another **Star Trek** series began airing. **Enterprise** was saddled with the task of appealing to a modern audience while being a believable prequel to a '60s TV show, which was probably why there were only two primary female characters. T'Pol (Jolene Blalock) and Hoshi Sato (Linda Park) weren't a priority for **Enterprise**, together or apart, but they still managed to break through its deficiencies and be truly amazing characters. They had their own agendas, and carved out a place for themselves in the universe, and they left an impact the Federation still felt hundreds of years later. Unfortunately, it was not enough for

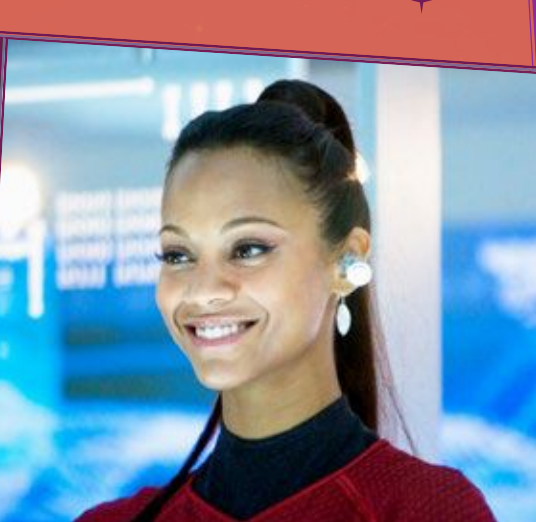
audiences or the network, and **Enterprise** was cancelled after four seasons.

Star Trek wasn't seen again until 2009. J. J. Abrams' alternate version of the Original Series had slick special effects, a darker origin story, and much younger crew. It was occasionally heartbreaking and often hilarious. It also, in a strange homage to the classic films, made Uhura (Zoe Saldana) the only recurring woman. There were other female characters: the excited Gaila (Rachel Nichols) and Carol Marcus (Alice Eve) fresh from her PhD, but otherwise Abrams' women were stripped down in every way. Chapel had become a reference. Rand did not exist. There were women in the background of ships and Starfleet Academy, but they were not friends. They hardly spoke to each other. It was disappointing given what had come before, but like their predecessors they still managed to inject great feeling and personality in the time they were given. They were talented and enthusiastic and unapologetically took what they wanted. They weren't impressed by unprofessionalism, and they didn't pander to the lead. It wasn't the equality fans

saw on **Voyager**, but in every scene these women reminded us that it could be.

It's unclear what the future holds for **Star Trek** and its wonderful women. **Star Trek Beyond** has women cast as crew and warriors and the head of the Federation, punching bad guys and leading our heroes to victory. Bryan Fuller, showrunner for the forthcoming TV series, promises a more progressive **Star Trek** than we've seen in the past. Hopefully, this means more women. Women who are in charge. Women who aren't sexualised, or reduced, or outnumbered on the screen. Women of all races and sexualities and gender presentations, who can show viewers a future we can truly aspire to.

But until then, we have these women. For fifty years, we watched them struggle from secondary roles to the captain of a starship - from characters the writers ignored to ones the story couldn't do without. They struggled, and they loved, and they tore down every barrier until they got the respect they deserved from the start. They taught us to be brave. They taught us to be bold. And they taught us that *everyone* could go where no one has gone before.



LET'S TALK ABOUT (HOLO)DECKS, BABY

by Iain Robertson

It's the most enjoyable, not to mention lethal
leisure activity of the 24th Century.
Come with us as we enter the Holodeck...

f all the fictional technology portrayed on *Star Trek* over the years, one piece in particular has remained frustratingly elusive. We now have real life versions of communicators, PADDs, and hyposprays, but the Holodeck, for now at least, remains largely fantastical. Whilst the likes of Oculus Rift and the upcoming PlayStation VR can offer realistic virtual environments, Holodecks offer a fully immersive experience, negating the need to wear a headset that makes you look a complete tit. It's likely we'll see a crude real-life model within the next decade or so, but unless they incorporate holographic, replicator, and transporter technology, they're unlikely to offer the level of interactivity offered by *Trek's* version.

Both before and during the run of the original series, Gene Roddenberry consulted with scientists, questioning them on what the technology of the future might look like. Holographic technology was amongst those ideas discussed, but budgetary and technological limits precluded its use at the time. When the '70s animated series afforded the opportunity to include ideas that had been impractical previously, a crude version of a Holodeck - then known by the less catchy moniker 'Rec Room' - was introduced in the episode *The Practical Joker*. It was a less-than-auspicious debut for one of *Trek's* most enduring inventions.

It was over a decade later, in *The Next Generation's* pilot episode *Encounter at Farpoint*, that the Holodeck was properly

introduced. An instant hit with fans - possibly due to Wesley's dunking in a stream in its inaugural appearance - the Holodeck quickly became a regular fixture on the burgeoning show. In the original series, if producers wanted to do a gangster, Roman, or Nazi-themed episode, they'd have to visit a planet where, due to an improbable chain of events, the society had developed along those lines. The Holodeck neatly circumvented this problem, allowing the (initially) po-faced series to occasionally lighten up and have fun.

But whilst the Holodeck afforded new opportunities for the show, it also had an inherent problem. Drama, especially the kind portrayed by *Star Trek*, requires at least the possibility of danger for the characters. As anyone who's ever watched someone else play on an Xbox can verify, there's little drama in watching someone else playing games for an hour. Fortunately for us, the Holodeck is the 24th Century equivalent of Internet Explorer, being the least reliable piece of equipment on board, not to mention one of the most lethal. It's one of the weaknesses of modern *Trek* that any episode set on the Holodeck has to invariably involve something going badly wrong, adding tension to what would otherwise be an undramatic episode.

Despite this problem, Holodecks have featured in all of *The Next Generation's* successors, each of which has put their own twist on the concept. Quark's bar on *Deep Space Nine* had a number of smaller Holosuites. And, being located in Quark's,

there were a number of more exotic programs on offer, with titles such as 'A Visit with the Pleasure Goddess of Rixx' and the ever-popular 'Vulcan Love Slave'.

Voyager, like *Next Generation*, tended to have a more wholesome, Starfleet-friendly selection of programs, but did introduce the concept of a Holonovel - literally a novel in Holodeck form. This saw characters visiting the same program several times over the course of a season, and consequently allowed for more elaborate programs. *Enterprise* on the other hand was, due to being set earlier than previous series, sadly Holodeck-less. This didn't stop them getting in on the act occasionally, though. Tucker once visited an alien ship featuring a primitive form of Holodeck (getting pregnant in the process, silly boy). And the series' controversial final episode took place on one of the *Enterprise-D's* Holodecks, with Riker and Troi visiting a recreation of the earlier ship.

Holodecks have always been somewhat of a divisive topic amongst fans. For every person who likes the occasional excursion into the Holodeck, there's another who thinks they're, well, a bit silly. However, with both the upcoming *Star Trek: Discovery* and current movie series set at a time prior to starships featuring Holodecks, it looks like it'll be some time before we see them on screen again, if ever. With reality slowly catching up on this aspect of *Trek* tech (you can see where we're going with this can't you?), perhaps it's time to 'end program' once and for all.

Our Top 10 Holodeck Programs

Whilst we're not guaranteeing the quality of the episodes they appear in (yes, we're talking about you, *Fistful of Datas*), here's the Top 10 Holodeck programs we'd love to try out. In case you're wondering, Vulcan Love Slave is at Number 11.



1. Dixon Hill

Of *TNG*'s myriad Holodeck programs, this was the one that put in the most appearances, and rightly so. Patrick Stewart as a private detective in the 1940s is so perfect, it's a wonder he's never taken up the mantle outside of *Trek*. The first season's *The Big Goodbye* is the only time we get to spend a full episode with Hill, complete with Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre lookalikes, as well as a cameo from the great Dick Miller. It was the first episode set in the Holodeck and, unsurprisingly, the first time it malfunctioned. The detective eventually graduated to the big screen in *First Contact*, with Picard using the program to both hide from and ambush the Borg.

Seen in: *The Big Goodbye*; *Manhunt*; *Clues (TNG)*; *Star Trek: First Contact*



2. The Adventures of Captain Proton

The greatest of *Voyager*'s Holonovels (the worst: that godawful Gothic mystery that Janeway spent ages messing about in during early episodes). Captain Proton is a pitch perfect Flash Gordon pastiche, featuring Tom Paris as the titular Captain and Harry Kim as his sidekick Buster Kincaid. Divided into chapters with titles such as *The Web of Pain* and *Satan's Robot Conquers the World*, the novel sees the pair take on the despicable Ming-alike Doctor Chaotica and his (period-appropriate) deeply crap robot. Oh, and in one episode, aliens visited the Holodeck, thought it was real, and Chaotica declared war on them, forcing Janeway to intervene in the guise of Arachnia, Queen of the Spider People. It's that kind of program.

Seen in: *Night*; *Thirty Days*; *Bride Of Chaotical!*; *Shattered (Voyager)*

3. James Bond

When 007 returned after a six-year hiatus with *Goldeneye*, *DS9* took the opportunity to do their own Bond tribute. Julian Bashir (who happily shares initials with the world's most famous fictional secret agent) makes for an amazingly suave spy. He's accompanied by Garak, constantly taking umbrage at the doctor's romanticised version of his profession. Due to some complicated business involving exploding runabouts and transporters, several of the program's characters are replaced by the likenesses of crew members. This means we're treated to a megalomaniac Sisko, O'Brien as an assassin, Kira as a seductive Soviet spy, and Dax a scientist named Honey Bare. Unfortunately, MGM weren't amused, meaning that, other than one brief scene the following season, we were denied any further adventures of Julian Bashir, secret agent.

Seen in: *Our Man Bashir*; *A Simple Investigation (DS9)*



4. Sherlock Holmes

Data's interest in Sherlock Holmes began as a throwaway gag in the first season. A year later, the show went full-on, with the android and Geordi becoming one of the more unique incarnations of Holmes and Watson to grace the screen. After a run through of the detective's greatest hits, they were pitted against a sentient version of Moriarty – a precursor to *Voyager*'s EMH.

The Professor, complete with love interest (Stephanie Beacham, no less), returned a few seasons later, threatening to destroy the ship unless the crew discover a way for him to leave the Holodeck. Eventually, tricked into thinking he's escaped his holographic confines, Moriarty goes off exploring the galaxy, still within the program, and everyone lives happily ever after. With the possible exception of Moriarty, who is forced to spend eternity with Stephanie Beacham.

Seen in: *Elementary*; *Dear Data*; *Ship in a Bottle (TNG)*



5. Vic's Lounge

OK, we'll admit it, this one's an acquired taste, but we like it. *Deep Space Nine* has its own Vegas casino, complete with resident lounge singer Vic Fontaine. Showing up towards the end of the show's run, Vic's became a regular hangout for the crew. It was here that Odo finally won over Kira, where Nog recuperated after being injured in action, and where the crew had their last get-together in the finale. It also saw the show's take on *Ocean's Eleven*, with the crew performing a heist when holographic mobsters temporarily took over the casino. On one occasion, Vic even got to duet with Sisko (Avery Brooks is actually a damn good singer, although unlike William Shatner, he rarely shares his gift with the world). In a word: groovy.

Seen in: *His Way*; *Tears Of The Prophets*; *Image In The Sand*; *The Siege of AR-558*; *It's Only A Paper Moon*; *Badda-Bing, Badda-Bang*; *What You Leave Behind (DS9)*

6. Saint Clare

With *Voyager* commandeered by the vicious Hirogen (whose culture is based around hunting), the crew are subjected to a variety of brutal hunts throughout assorted Holodeck programs. Chief amongst them is the fictional city of Saint Clare, in Nazi-occupied France. The crew, unaware of their real identities, are cast as a mixture of French resistance and American forces, hunted by alien Nazis. Janeway is a café owner turned resistance leader, Tuvok her extremely logical second-in-command (and bartender), whilst Seven sings and shoots Nazis, although sadly not at the same time. Oh, and it culminates with holographic Klingons and Nazis fighting each other. Loads of fun, and the only Holodeck-based two-parter in the whole of *Trek*.

Seen in: *The Killing Game 1 and 2 (Voyager)*



7. Kirk's Enterprise

Who wouldn't want to recreate the coolest starship in history? Here, the *Enterprise* is the setting for easily the most touching scene ever to take place on a Holodeck (sorry, Tasha Yar's eulogy). After surviving 75 years inside a transporter, Scotty finds himself a man out of time in the 24th Century. Taking solace in the Holodeck, the engineer recreates the classic *Enterprise* bridge ("NCC-1701. No bloody A, B, C or D"), shares a drink with Picard, and drinks a toast to his long-departed colleagues. Scotty wasn't the only character to recreate other starships. Riker and Troi spent most of *Enterprise*'s finale wandering round Archer's *Enterprise* and annoying fans, whilst Barclay got addicted to a simulation of *Voyager* – well, we suppose someone had to.

Seen in: *Relics (TNG)*



8. Insurrection Alpha

Cast your mind back to 1995 in the lead-up to *Voyager* premiering. Remember how excited we were about two very different crews – Starfleet and Maquis – sharing the same ship, and the possibilities that opened up? Then the series started and the two opposing sides had effectively kissed and made up by the end of the first episode. Designed as a training program by Tuvok, *Insurrection Alpha* gave us a tantalising glimpse of what might have been, with Chakotay's rebels attempting a coup on *Voyager*. Also notable for being one of the few episodes with a credible reason for the program turning deadly, as a lethal trap left hidden within the program is sprung.

Seen in: *Worst Case Scenario (Voyager)*



9. Wild West

Worf's son Alexander gave Wesley Crusher a run for his money as *TNG*'s most irritating character, but he did at least give us a fun, if very silly Western-themed program. Forcing a reluctant Worf into spending some leisure time with him, the pair become sheriff and deputy of the town of Deadwood, accompanied by Troi as the superbly-named Durango. With a program involving gunslingers, lusty saloon keepers and a brothel (courtesy of Lt. Barclay), the trio have their work cut out for them. And that's before, naturally, everything goes wrong, and most of the town's occupants are replaced by lethal replicas of Data. One warning, though: you're treated – if that's the right word – to the sight of Data in a dress. It doesn't suit him.

Seen in: *A Fistful of Datas (TNG)*

10. Data's Poker Game

Notable for a cameo from Professor Stephen Hawking (the only person ever to appear on *Trek* as themselves), Data's poker game features the android playing against some of history's greatest scientists. Alongside Hawking, the game sees Data matching wits against an irritable Sir Isaac Newton and an absent-minded Einstein. Designed so Data could observe how three of history's greatest minds would interact with each other, the answer is 'not well'. Their constant bickering and jokes about Newtonian physics makes you quite glad when proceedings are interrupted by the Borg. Oh, Hawking wins the hand, obviously.

Seen in: *Descent Part One (TNG)*



And the worst:

Barclay's creepy fantasy land

There are some people whose fantasy lives should remain private. Lieutenant Barclay is most definitely one of them. In his first appearance, the socially awkward engineer is addicted to the Holodeck, feeling more comfortable there than in the real world. Whilst the program allowed Barclay to vent his frustrations on recreations of male crew members, it's Counsellor Troi's seductive Goddess of Empathy that you suspect he focused most of his attention on. Although notable for being one of the few times *The Next Generation* so much as implied that people might possibly use Holodecks for less than wholesome activities, recreating crew members for (we presume) nefarious reasons is, well, mildly rapey.

Seen in: *Hollow Pursuits (TNG)*



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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CHEKOV

BY ROBIN PIERCE

Following the sad and untimely passing of actor Anton Yelchin, who played CHEKOV in the latest series of movies, we shine a spotlight on the vital and often unsung member of the Enterprise crew.



From its initial conception, *Star Trek* was going to be different from the standard prime-time sci-fi fare of its day. Gene Roddenberry's fabled 'wagon train to the stars' would not only promote peace and harmony throughout the outer reaches of the galaxy, but undertaking this role would be a brave crew, diverse in race, creed and colour. It would be obvious that the civil rights strife and unrest, the racial intolerance and bigotry that was very much in evidence in the mid-twentieth century would be banished by the twenty-third.

And this is where the story of Ensign Pavel Andreievich Chekov begins.....

Or it might have done, except for a glaring omission that embarrassed Roddenberry into action.

In its first season, the U.S.S. Enterprise bridge was a kind of space-bound United Nations; there was an American captain (albeit played by a Canadian), a Scottish Chief Engineer, a Japanese helmsman, an African communications officer, and additionally, we saw an English transporter

officer and an Irish navigator.

But as the first season drew to a close and the show was renewed for a second run, some cast tweaking was considered. There was a gap in the demographic. In a studio memo to casting director Joe D'Agosta, Roddenberry addressed the need to bring in the pre-college teens, and suggested keeping an eye on current trends. Specifically, he was looking for "A young, irreverent, English accent Beatle-type to try on the show. Like the smallish fellow who seems to be a hit on *The Monkees*".

In his quest to find out what the teens were into, Roddenberry became aware of a damning article in the youth edition of the then-Soviet newspaper *Pravda*. While praising *Star Trek* overall, they had taken exception to the omission of a Russian on board the Starship – particularly as the Russians had made a major contribution to space travel and had sent a man into orbit ahead of the USA.

As Roddenberry noted in 1968: "*The Chekov thing was a major error on*

our part, and I'm still embarrassed by the fact that we didn't include a Russian right from the beginning."

One wonders why the NBC executives hadn't already picked up on this as a missed opportunity, as they were enjoying a massive hit with their spy show *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, featuring David McCallum as heartthrob Russian agent Ilya Kuryakin working alongside American Napoleon Solo in a multinational spy organisation.

Cast in the role was New York-born actor Walter Koenig, who made his début as the eager-to-please, sometimes impetuous young hero when the second season started on September 15th, 1968 with the episode *Amok Time*, complete with an outrageously bushy Beatles wig that was worn in the first few episodes to be filmed. Despite the character of Chekov being aimed at the teenage members of the audience - who reportedly saw Kirk and Spock as middle-aged - Koenig himself was actually only five years younger than William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy.



It didn't take long for the brash young navigator to become a fan favourite. But what do we actually know about Pavel Chekov?

The year of his birth was 2245, and he was an only child. He attended Starfleet Academy, where he had a relationship with a fellow student, Irina Galliulin, which she ended.

The U.S.S. Enterprise, under the command of Captain James T. Kirk, was his first posting.

He is irrepressibly proud of his Russian heritage, and will enthusiastically lay claim to Russian advancements in the fields of exploration and discovery whether they are accurate or not (much to the barely hidden chagrin of the ship's First Officer Spock, who regularly mentors – and corrects-him).

During his five-year mission on board the Enterprise, Chekov proved to be a valuable asset to the crew, although sometimes his eagerness and impetuosity could land him in trouble.

Usually, he was resigned to the role

of a peripheral character, set dressing for the bridge, asking a question that needed an explanation for the audience to further the plot – or simply as an extra member of a landing party. Basically, the only difference between him and a red shirt was that Chekov would survive the episode, whereas the red shirt wouldn't see the first commercial break.

But when he wasn't a prop, or encouraging Lieutenant Uhura to bring a tribble infestation aboard the Starship, Chekov made valuable contributions – so here are some of Chekov's proudest moments.

Although the Halloween-themed episode *Catspaw* was the first filmed of season two, Chekov's first screen appearance for the audience was in the season premiere *Amok Time*, and his first line of dialogue was to Captain Kirk: "We'll have to head directly there at warp six, sir. Insufficient time to stop off at Vulcan". Of course, this would change and Vulcan was exactly where they'd end up.

Chekov had his moment in the spotlight in *The Deadly Years*, where the landing party of the Enterprise started to age rapidly due to a radiation contamination – all except for young Pavel, who remained as young as ever. As time was running out, and weariness and forgetfulness were setting in on Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, they realised that Chekov had momentarily split up from the rest of the group and had encountered an aged corpse in a dark room that had startled him. Adrenaline was the key to a solution and the aging process was reversed.

When a landing party found themselves beamed into a savage alternate universe in *Mirror, Mirror*: Kirk found the reverse version of the loyal and reliable young officer. The evil Chekov unsuccessfully tried to assassinate his Captain to gain a quick promotion and was thrown into an agony booth for his trouble.

Slightly more about the Ensign was revealed in two episodes of the third season.



In *Day of the Dove*, the crew unknowingly encounter a being that thrives on conflict for its own gratification. Thus, it manipulates both a Klingon crew and the Enterprise to wage a mini war. To motivate hatred toward the enemy in Chekov, it gave him the delusion that his brother Piotr had been killed by the Klingons. Chekov was an only child.

Hippie culture comes to the 23rd century when a crowd of authority-defying young people follow their guru Dr Severin. They hijack the Enterprise and navigate toward a mythical paradise planet in *The Way to Eden*. One of the young rebels is Irina Galliulin, Chekov's ex-girlfriend from Starfleet Academy who dropped out due to her life philosophy being radically different from that of a prospective Starfleet officer. Though tempted to join the hippies on their ill-fated mission (the planet and its vegetation are deadly), Chekov resists and it is Irina who sees the error of her ways.

Following the completion of the five-year mission, Chekov was promoted

to Lieutenant and was assigned to the Enterprise as Security Chief during the V'ger crisis of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

He later served as a Science Officer aboard the Reliant, which mistakenly crossed the path of genetically enhanced Khan Noonian Singh and was manipulated to trap Kirk and the Enterprise crew. Khan's remark that he never forgets a face, despite the character having only appeared in a first season episode prior to Chekov's arrival on the show, is one of *Star Trek's* greatest points of contention. The official explanation is that Chekov was always on the ship, just unseen on the lower decks until his assignment as the navigator brought him to the bridge.

Spock sacrificed his life to save the Enterprise and its crew in the battle of the Mutara Nebula as seen in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, but as the story arc continued in the following two films, Chekov was one of the loyal crew members who risked everything to join Kirk in stealing the Enterprise to go on a

quest to rescue their Vulcan comrade who had been accidentally resurrected in the life-giving matrix of the Genesis torpedo.

In the original timeline, Chekov was last seen in *Star Trek: Generations*, as a V.I.P. visitor on board the Enterprise-B with Kirk and Scott as she embarked upon her ill-fated maiden voyage.

Recently, of course, *Star Trek* has seen its own alternative timeline where the familiar characters are broadly similar, yet different. Only a certain elderly Vulcan has seen both timelines and has been at pains not to show himself - at least, not too often. In this reality, Chekov is a 17-year-old prodigy, brilliant at mathematics - he becomes Chief Engineer when Scotty resigns.

The alternate Chekov was played by Anton Yelchin, who sadly passed away in a tragic accident on June 19th, 2016 - barely a month before the release of *Star Trek Beyond*. We at STARBURST pay our respects to him and his contribution to the *Star Trek* legacy.





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TO BOLDLY GAME...

BY ED FORTUNE

IT'S HARD TO WATCH STAR TREK WITHOUT WANTING TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION. ALAS, WE WERE ALL BORN TOO SOON TO BOLDLY GO ANYWHERE INTO SPACE, BUT LUCKILY BOARD GAMES EXIST TO HELP US IMAGINE WHAT THAT WOULD BE LIKE.

One of the newest and most exciting *Star Trek* games is *Star Trek Frontiers* by Wizkids. It's one of those rather big, complex games that once you get into it rather takes up your gaming time. You can be one of four captains, Picard, Sisko, Martok or the Duras Sisters. That's right; it's Klingons versus the Federation. You fly around the galaxy, recruiting crew from space stations and expanding the board (which is a modular hex-based affair). Find a planet and you can send an away team. You can send the captain, but that's always a risk. There are different approaches to play; you can diplomatically recruit people and talk your way out of encounters with hostile aliens, or you can punch your way through. It's very, very similar to Wizkid's *Mage Knight* (which it's based on) but *Star Trek* actually fits game rules better than *Mage Knight* ever did. The end game involves a battle royale with the Borg; of course it does.



Star Trek Panic!

Frontiers isn't the only interesting re-skin of an existing game that actually suits the *Star Trek* Universe a little better than the original. *Star Trek Panic!* is based on *Castle Panic!* - the popular family board game of siege battles. In the original game, you all work together to prevent goblins, orcs, and other fantasy beasts from tearing down your castle. The *Star Trek* variant is much the same, swapping trolls for Klingons and Romulans. Rather than having a cardboard castle as the centerpiece, you get a really cool-looking classic Enterprise that you can slot explosions and the like onto. The various action cards (which you use to defend the ship) are appropriately themed, allowing you to fire phasers or throw redshirts at the problem. The game also has mission cards, which are things like 'The Trouble with Tribbles' and require you to play cards in the right sequence.

Another reskin is *Star Trek Catan*. It's the trading and road-building game *Settlers of Catan*, but with space lanes instead of roads and exotically named chemicals instead of Ore, Wood, and so on. They added in Spock, Kirk, etc. as rules modifying cards, and this makes it just *Star Trek* enough to make it worth a look. *Star Trek Five-Year Mission* is an all-original game in which you work together to complete mission cards (blue, yellow and red alert themed). Each player is a crew member with a special ability, and you roll and match different coloured



Star Trek Catan

dice to complete a mission. Interestingly, the main game gives you both Original and Next Generation heroes to play with, and you can mix and match them to form your favourite crossover.

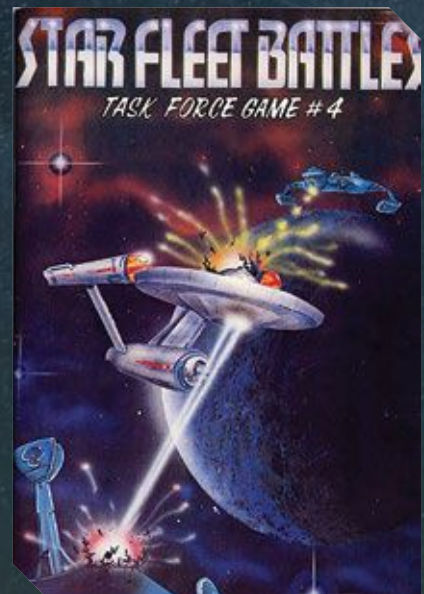
Star Trek has enjoyed a very long history of starship battle games. 1979's *Star Fleet Battles* is the granddaddy of spaceship battle games, with pretty much everything that followed owing something to this



Star Trek Frontiers



Star Trek Frontiers



big, complicated and incredibly detailed simulation. Interestingly, it's not quite *Star Trek*; the *Star Fleet Battles* license diverges significantly from its source material (The Original Series and The Animated Series), and though you'll recognise the models, the setting is radically different, with new ships invented as the game demands. It's still around after all these years, mostly thanks to Print on Demand.



Star Trek Attack Wing

Those looking for a more authentic *Star Trek* space ship experience, with actual models based on the franchise, should take a look at *Star Trek Attack Wing*. This is another game from Wizkids and uses pre-painted models. It also uses Fantasy Flight Games' Flight Path system, which will be familiar to anyone who's played *Star Wars X-Wing*, but the models are a totally different scale. Basically, a Constitution-class cruiser such as the *Enterprise* is the same size as a TIE-Fighter in *X-Wing*. This basically allows you to have loads and loads of cruiser (or bigger) sized starships attempt to blow each other up.



Star Trek Attack Wing

Wizkids hasn't been shy about their release schedule. Unlike *X-Wing* (which wants you to carefully build and consider your unit with a limited range of factions), *Star Trek Attack Wing* goes all out and throws all the cool ships from all the various alien races at you with alarmingly regularity. It's a game that trusts its player base to dive into the story of the *Star Trek* world, and lets you play out scenarios such as 'Could Kirk defeat the Borg?' or 'What if Picard captained the original *Enterprise*'. Wizkids also like big scenario set pieces. Ever wanted to be at the big Federation versus Borg encounter known as The Battle of Wolf 359? Wizkids does a big honking Borg cube, as well as lots of 'baby' Borg cubes and other shapes to try and blow up. Want to set up your own Dominion War in your living room? *Attack Wing* delivers with a lovely-looking DS9 on a rather firm stand.

Attack Wing is a very different game to *Star Fleet Battles*, but what it lacks in complexity it more than makes up for in fun. The game design is all about the crew; you want the best crew, and yes, you can do it all with one well-equipped cruiser. Sure, it goes nuts with Bajoran, Borg, Dominion, Federation, Hirogen, Vidian, Gorn, Maquis, Tholian, Krenim, Andorian, Klingon, Romulan, Vulcan, Xindi, Species 8472, and Mirror Universe ships all being available, but variety is the spice of life.



There have been many, many other games inspired by *Star Trek*. If we ignore the *Scrabble*, *Monopoly*, and other theme-less re-treads, there are some treasures here. Milton Bradley's 1979 game was a movie tie-in that worked a bit like *A Game of Life*, but with black holes and alien probes. 1967's *Star Trek Game* was a racing game in which you had to visit some planets and return to Earth but it also happened to have a gorgeous-looking '60s-style board. *Star Trek: The Next Generation – Interactive VCR Board Game – A Klingon Challenge* was a VHS game that had you working together to stop a Klingon from using the *Enterprise* to start a Federation/



Interactive VCR Game

Klingon War. It had some neat twists, and if you've thrown away your VCR, you can find the whole thing on YouTube.



There are plenty of new games on the way as well. Gale Force Nine games (best known for their *Firefly* game) are bringing out *Ascendancy*, which promises to be a 'birth of the Federation' game, which may match *Star Wars Rebellion* in terms of intricacy. Also, Modiphius Games (who gave us the lovely *Thunderbirds* board game) have announced *Star Trek Adventure*, a roleplaying game for 2017. *Trek* has lacked an RPG for a while, and Modiphius do space adventure really well, so we are really looking forward to this. The same company is doing a 32mm miniature battles game, which will focus on away missions and boarding parties. We're hoping for lots of redshirt versus Klingon action, with some fun scenarios.



STAR TREK
ADVENTURES

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MODIPHIOUS.COM/STAR-TREK

STORE TREK



BY JACK BOTTOMLEY

AS STAR TREK HITS ITS GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY, WE DETECT THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL MERCHANDISE THE FRANCHISE HAS BEAMED UP OVER THE YEARS...

Space may be the final frontier but if we here at STARBURST have learned anything over the years, it is that the merchandise a franchise can create, like space, has no boundaries. *Star Trek* is not just a multi-format-crossing creation, it is a brand, so we look back at the toy and spin-off enterprise across the years. A lot of this gear has crossed generations of sci-fi lovers. So, let's set a course through history and look at the good, the bad and the moH (yes we speak Klingon) of *Star Trek* merch...

Star Trek Metal Detection Probe (JETCO, 1976)

At the top of every kid's wish list is a metal detector... you know it's true. So trust JETCO to beam up a *Trek*-inspired item that is bound to make you the envy of the neighbourhood... or not. Still, it ought to help with The Search for Schlock! (Sadly, it won't help with the formulation of better puns).



Star Trek Marshmallow Dispenser (Kraft, 1989)

Remember that scene in *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* (1989), in which Spock (Leonard Nimoy), Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner) and Leonard 'Bones' McCoy (DeForest Kelley) sit around a campfire, as ol' pointy ears whips out his device to produce 'Marsh Melons'? Yep, Kraft took the ball and ran with it, with this licensed mail order exclusive Marshmallow Dispenser.



Mr. Spock Helmet (Azrak-Hamway Incorporated, 1976)

Look up bullying in the dictionary and you'll probably see a picture of a young kid in this helmet getting his dinner Federation Credits taken. Basically, a helmet fashioned after the one worn by Mr. Spock in th... what's that? Spock didn't wear a helmet? Hmm, perhaps someone should have informed Azrak-Hamway Incorporated then, as their headwear toy made kids look like a faux fireman with a siren glued to his or her head. Change may be the essential progress of all existence but this is just, well, illogical.



Star Trek Garden Gnome (ThinkGeek, 2015)

One of the most memorable sequences in Trekdom is Captain Kirk's fight with The Gorn in *Arena* (S1, E18). Over the years, fans have imitated the fight on California's Vasquez Rocks and so has popular culture (see 2011's *Paul*). But ThinkGeek went where gnome man has gone before, immortalising the clash in resin form. Fans are gorn-a like it!



Mr. Rock Figure (Lincoln International, unknown)

Neither Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson nor a rock star, Mr. Rock is instead the hilarious result of *Star Trek* bootlegging. Mr Spock is re-imagined as a fair-haired elf and some kind of air force pilot based on the moon (going by the package art). Best yet, the toy is billed as including a Ray Gun and Space Communicator - where they are however, is anyone's guess... enjoy.



Officially Licensed Star Trek Tea (ThinkGeek, 2012)

Tea drinking has a place in *Trek* lore. George Takei's Hikaru Sulu certainly enjoyed a morning cup. However, when you say tea and *Star Trek* in the same breath, fans only think of four words, 'Tea. Earl Grey. Hot'. These infamous words came from one Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) of *The Next Generation*-era and Picard would especially approve of this classy loose-leaf Earl Grey tea. Take it to your brewer and make it so.



CSF Enterprise (Remco, 1976)



While some people crave model ships or miniatures, many would agree that Remco's Controlled Space Flight (CSF) U.S.S. Enterprise was a quantum torpedo-sized hit. Operated by a double lever, you control the ship and move around the various accessories, channelling your inner Kirk and commanding your own missions. The toy became a standout release for the company and is quite a collector's item, with some paying nearly £200 for them today.

Star Trek Utility Belt (Remco, 1975)



From Batman to Mickey Mouse (no, we don't get it either), Remco's line of utility belts was one of the company's most memorable toys and *Star Trek's* utility belt was pretty cool. The belt brandished the logo, alongside a communicator, Tricorder and best of all a phaser that shoots discs!

Phaser Target Game (Mego, 1975)



Speaking of phasers, Remco also gave us their shape-projecting Electric Phaser toy in 1975, but Mego took the Mapa Bread with their 1975 Phaser Target Game. Basically an early laser tag, it was an imperfect but essential dream item for many young Trekkies, with box art by Harold Shull too. Set phasers to fun.

Spock Oven Mitt (ThinkGeek, 2012)

Vulcan hands are strong enough for a death grip but we don't want to risk a burn now do we, thankfully ThinkGeek have the perfect solution in this geekily great oven mitt. Well, we say that, they are fekkin' huge but you know what they say about Vulcans with big hands... No seriously, do you? Because we haven't a clue.



Star Trek Action Figures (Mego, 1974)



Mego's 8" figures are iconic and in 1974, *Star Trek* got its own line. These figures were based on the original TV series but many designers took influence from the 1973-4 animated series. Originally the topline comprised of Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, Mr. Scott (incorrectly spelt 'Scottie' instead of Scotty), and the Klingon, until a sixth figure was added in Lt. Uhura. The original figures are sought after, costing around £70 nowadays, with a very rare U.S.S. Enterprise Gift Set (not to be confused with 1976's Mego Enterprise Play Set) being the magnum opus; this set included all five original figures but is so rare, its exact manufacture is hard to pin point.

Star Trek Binoculars (Larami, 1969)

For all the *Star Trek*-loving bird watchers out there or peeping toms, this is the item for you. Seriously though, these Binoculars from Larami are hardly exciting but at least you could spot the Romulans coming with them, - maybe the Vulcans could have done with some of these, then. Too soon?



Picard's Chair (Huston Huddleston, 2014)



Huston Huddleston saved an Enterprise bridge set built by Paramount and, alongside the New Starship Foundation (NSF), refurbished it for fan conventions. Only Picard's chair was unsalvageable, so they constructed a replica that, over its numerous festival visits, was sat upon by various celebrities including Al Yankovic, Nichelle 'Uhura' Nichols, and Stan Lee. The chair brought \$6,800 in a charity sale on eBay, making this the priciest bit of merch on our list.

Paddle (Etsy, 2015)

If you are an avid follower of our merchandise features, you know that where there is a major franchise, there's always a segway into sex, and *Star Trek* is no exception. Correct us if we're wrong, but at no point in J. J. Abrams' 2009 reboot did Chris Pine's Kirk get his arse tanned with a paddle, like this BDSM one by GeekKink on Etsy. Perhaps the initiation into Starfleet Academy is a little tougher nowadays.



The Next Generation Klingon Sunglasses (Sun-Staches, 2016)



We all know about the pointy Spock ears, but what about these Sun-Staches Klingon sunglasses that allow you to sport the same crumpled, slightly scrotal-looking, forehead of a Klingon, all while keeping your eyes UV protected?

Khan Shirt

(Paramount, 2015)

After a very controversial revival of the character in 2013's *Into Darkness*, we can all agree Ricardo Montalban's Khan Noonien Singh can't be beat. From his first appearance in *Space Seed* to his turn in what many still call the best ever *Trek* film, *The Wrath of Khan* (1982), Montalban's villain is intelligent and cold. So if you think the Enterprise

lot are too nice and are crying out for some KHAAAAAAAAANage, then this brilliant shirt (modelled on the torso of the augmented antagonist) will not require Ceti Eels to guarantee a purchase.

Picard Face Palm Cookie Cutter

(Warzone Prints, 2013)

Ever had those friends who don't know their stuff but pretend to anyway? Well, give them a hint

with arguably the best item on this list. Modelled on the now classic face palm shot of Picard - which has since made meme history - this handmade cookie cutter is the biggest baked hint you could ever cook up.



Spork Figure

(Junk Fed, 2015)

Influenced by both *Star Trek* and *Mork and Mindy*, this figure from Junk Fed is specifically designed to capture that bootleg amalgamation of craziness. Paying tribute to both Robin Williams and Leonard Nimoy, this figure is a fun way to salute two great names in pop culture and the mad spaceman in a straight jacket cover design is the icing on the food-synthesised cake.



Star Trek Chalk Set

(Hasbro, 1969)

For all the techno-wizardry and innovation that *Star Trek* breeds, sometimes it is the simple things that conjure up a smile. Enter Hasbro's cool little chalkboard. No idea why the Enterprise is pictured upside down on the board though - has it been shot down? Again?



Vulcan Land Deed

(Star Trek Properties, 2007)

These certificates, oft signed by official sources, were set up as a fun extra for fans. Sure you are paying for nothing, but it's a neat little thing to pin on your sleeping quarters' wall. Unless the certificate really does buy you land on Vulcan or Qo'noS, in which case that's the retirement getaway sorted.



Spock Breast Meld Pocket Flask

(USA, 2015)

Sometimes we wonder how many drugs are being beamed about, when items like this pocket flask exist, which pictures a rather explicit interaction ('Vulcan breast meld') between a topless lady and our favourite Second Officer. Spock is surely the last crewmember that would get up to such hanky panky. There are also coin and tampon cases with the same design. Stay classy Starfleet.



Star Trek Nutcrackers

(What on Earth, 2008)

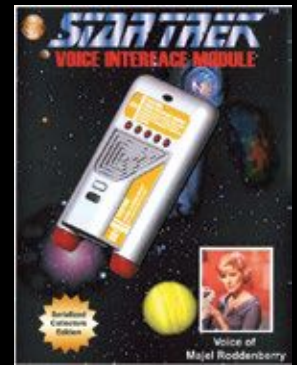
Bones had many verbal tussles with Spock. Maybe breaking nuts with these cracking (sorry) Nutcrackers would be therapeutic for the angry doctor.



Voice-Operated Dimmer

(VOS Systems Inc., 2007)

After the untimely passing of Anton Yelchin (a devastating loss), who portrays Pavel Chekov (a role made famous by Walter Koenig) in the new *Star Trek* movies, we're immediately reminded of the scene in the 2009 film where he struggles (strong accent and all) with the Enterprise computer. We can only imagine how he'd struggle with this rather nifty plug-in voice-activated lighting dimmer system that features the actual voice of the late Majel Roddenberry, who voiced the onboard computer in *The Next Generation* series.



Star Trek Caskets

(Eternal Image, 2009)

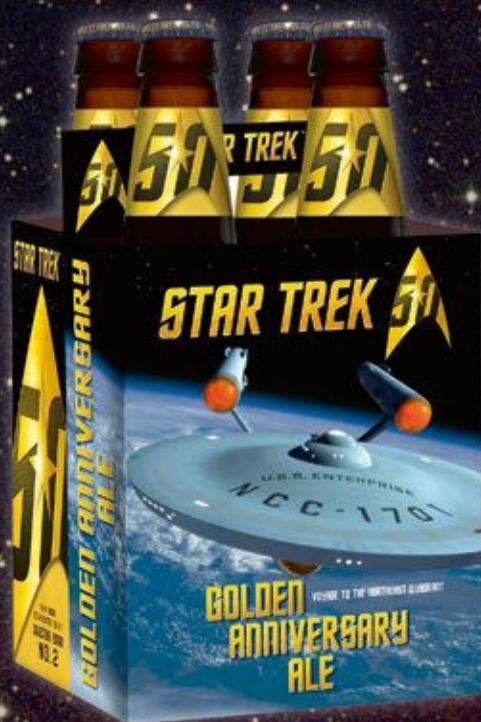
Live long and, err, well, you know. With these custom *Star Trek* coffins, fans can boldly go where everyone goes eventually. Death has never looked so smart. As Kirk once said, 'Beauty... Survives', even if those inside this casket - modelled on *Wrath of Khan*'s Klingon proton torpedoes - don't.



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WISHFUL THINKING

BY TOMMY JAMES

AS WE'RE ABOUT TO BOLDLY GO ONCE MORE ON THE SMALL SCREEN, STARBURST PONDERES WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE FROM THE UPCOMING STAR TREK SHOW...

In January 2017, the new *Star Trek* series will air on CBS: All Access, an online streaming service exclusive to US audiences. Elsewhere, we'll be able to see it on Netflix. However, execs are keeping tight-lipped over any and all details of what we can expect from the latest instalment of the much beloved franchise. In May, a fifty-second teaser trailer was released indicating that the show will focus on new characters, new ships, and new worlds, with the emphasis on the plural prompting

a flurry of online excitement and speculation. Creator Bryan Fuller (*DS9*, *Voyager*) along with Nicholas Meyer (*The Wrath of Khan*, *The Undiscovered Country*) and Rod Roddenberry serve as executive producers, so expectations are high despite specifics being scarce, which hasn't put a dampening (field) on our wish list of what we hope to see from *Trek*'s return to the small screen.

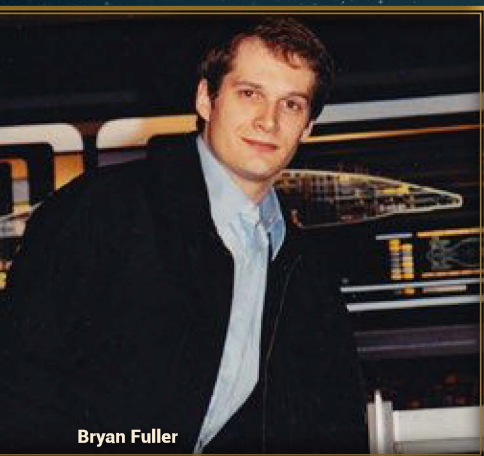
CHARACTER DIVERSITY

If rumours that the new series will focus on multiple crews are true, then this presents an excellent opportunity to expand and diversify the core cast, ensuring genders, races, and sexual orientations are all represented fairly. For a franchise often praised for being progressive, *Star Trek* has received criticism in the past for the gender ratio of its cast, so hopefully, Fuller and co. will redress that balance with three-dimensional female characters that are more Janeway than Janice Rand. Fuller also recently teased the addition of the first LGBT character for *Trek*-TV. Ideally, there will be a bypassing of a tortured 'coming out' storyline and instead a presentation of a gay character whose role and identity is not driven solely by sexuality. The series has often gained mileage through the inclusion of the

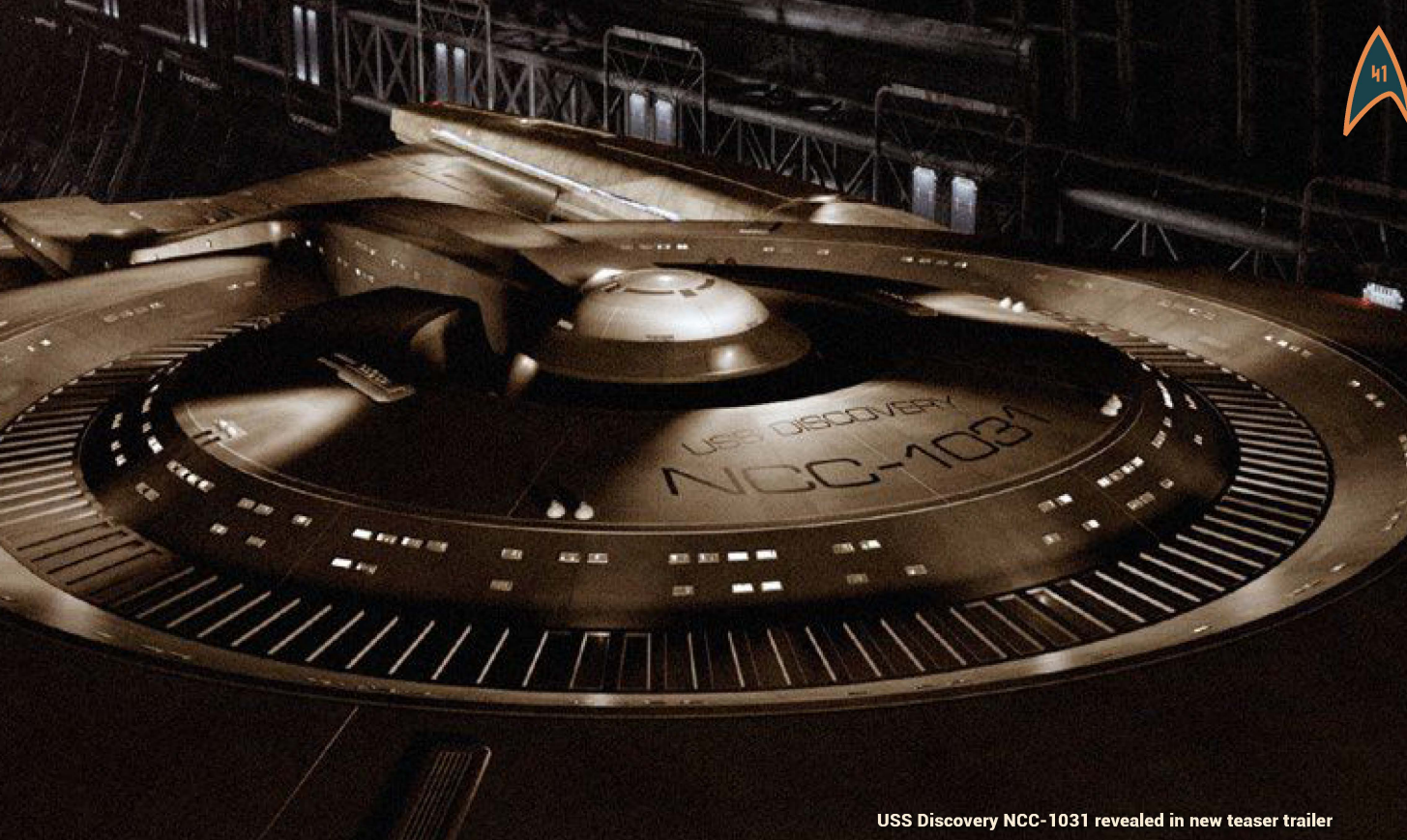
'first Vulcan/Klingon/Ferengi/Borg in Starfleet' concept, so we'd like to see that trend continue, albeit without recycling past narratives. In these fragile times where race relations are at the forefront of modern politics, it seems more important than ever to portray people from different backgrounds working together in unity towards a common goal of peaceful exploration. It is, after all, the 23rd century.

A BRAND NEW FLEET

The Enterprise(s), the Defiant, and Voyager; each uniquely designed and crafted to represent the theme of its respective parent series. Now it's time for something different. The trailer promises new ships, but this doesn't necessarily mean Starfleet ships. Even casual fans are familiar with a Klingon Bird of Prey or Romulan Warbird, but given that the Federation has 60+ different classes of starship, it's not unreasonable to assume that other species have their own hidden armadas stashed behind a moon somewhere that are raring for some screen time. One of the most entertaining aspects of *Wolf 359* or the Battle of Deep Space 9 was the eclectic spectacle of rarely seen Federation ships lined up in formation; hopefully, the rumoured wider setting of the new series will provide



Bryan Fuller



USS Discovery NCC-1031 revealed in new teaser trailer

viewers with another opportunity to witness such a masterpiece of cinematography.

ORIGINAL STORYTELLING

With thirteen films, seven-hundred and twenty-six episodes of television and numerous novels (not to mention some Kirk/Spock fan fiction that can be found in the darker corners of the Internet), at first glance, finding an original story to tell may seem problematic. The series is set to consist of thirteen episodes that will be released weekly in the format of a season-wide story arc rather than standalone episodes.

As the setting is rumoured to follow *The Undiscovered Country* but precede *TNG*, producers are burdened with a timeline of events to adhere to. There may even be opportunity for a nostalgia boost in the form of some returning familiar faces, though for the series to truly succeed then a simple doff of the cap to the past would suffice, rather than building an entire story around it. Fortunately, there are seventy years of untapped history to play with, and whilst ardent Trekkies may be able to fill some of the blanks, many events that took place during this time period remain a mystery. Until, possibly, now.

PROSTHETICS, TECHNOLOGY, AND COMEDY (OH MY!)

Giant ears. Holodeck shenanigans. Tribbles. *Star Trek* thrives in punctuating action with wry moments of humour. With only a short first



ST: TNG - Worf, Starfleet's first Klingon



ST: TOS - Kirk having some trouble with Tribbles



Star Trek: The Search For Spock - USS Enterprise NCC-1701 and a Klingon Bird-of-Prey



USS Discovery

series, there may be temptation to focus on ramping up the drama, but it's important for the show to retain its comedic edge - one of the aspects that made the original such a universally enjoyable experience. There may not be time for capers à la *TNG*'s 'Ship in a Bottle', but if we don't see at least one alien dressed up as a famous character from the world of 19th century literature in a holo-novel gone awry, then we're beaming out.

FIRST CONTACT

It's not enough to introduce new alien races to the screen by equipping them with character traits unique to their species. Sure, the Klingons have their honour, the Vulcans have their logic, and the Ferengi would consider Black Friday a national day of mourning, but that can only take a story so far. Consider instead the history between Bajor and Cardassia. The harnessing of the Jem'Hadar at the hands of the Dominion. The new boys in town need to debut in such a way that we become enveloped in their history; we need a compelling reason for Starfleet to become involved if the audience is to truly invest in any new characters, particularly

as the original ones are already so firmly established. The series needs to live up to its historic opening credit voiceover and not only seek out new life and civilisations but also cast them in significant roles going forward to truly continue the evolution of the franchise.

A WORTHY NEMESIS

Kirk had Khan. Sisko had Gul Dukat. We don't yet know what form Starfleet's newest captain(s) may take, but a credible threat - a nemesis who can continually checkmate the hero through psychological warfare as well as, or even instead of, physical acts of aggression - is absolutely essential to the success of the new series. Antagonists are never more deadly than when their villainy becomes personal, and in particular, Khan's obsession with destroying Kirk proved to be fatal in both *Star Trek* timelines. 'He tasks me. He tasks me, and I shall have him'. Preach it, Khan. You shall.

A TRADITIONAL SCORE

Enterprise may have divided fans and critics alike, but one thing that most people agree on was that the decision to replace the traditional score with an American Idol-esque theme song wasn't a good idea. Unfortunately, the short trailer for the new series has the camera hurtling through the galaxy with the finesse of a *3rd Rock from the Sun* scene-breaker, but we're not giving up hope. For brand recognition if nothing else, our fingers are crossed that original composers Dennis McCarthy and Jerry Goldsmith boldly go backwards to the time of stirring trumpets and daring violins. And no singing. Not even in your head. The Vulcans will know.

The new series of STAR TREK airs from January 2017.

ST: TNG - Holodeck Moriarty



ST: DS9 - Jem'Hadar and Cardassians



ST: TOS - Captain Kirk with Khan



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DAVE FREEMAN

Star Trek Beyond concept artist

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OUTSIDE THE BOX



Series Ten Update

Filming has continued on next year's series of **Doctor Who**, with stars Peter Capaldi and Pearl Mackie having travelled to Valencia in Spain to shoot the Frank Cottrell Boyce-penned Episode Two. This episode may not necessarily be set in Spain, though; the filming took place at Valencia's City of Arts and Science Museum, an unusual-looking building which would fit right into a futuristic sci-fi cityscape.

The crew then returned to Cardiff, where, at the time of writing, they're hard at work on Sarah Dollard's Episode Three, believed to be a period piece set in the nineteenth century.

We've also got news of some of the series' guest stars; **Royle Family** star Ralf Little released a video refuting rumours that he's in the new series – however, since that video was filmed on the TARDIS, we reckon he may not be telling the whole truth... Meanwhile, Tomi May, who **Sherlock** fans will know as *The Empty Hearse*'s torturer, has a guest role in at least one of episodes three and four.

Matt Strevens Named New Exec

It's been known for a while that Chris Chibnall will be taking over from Steven Moffat as showrunner beginning with 2018's Series Eleven, but the BBC have now announced that Matt Strevens will be joining Chibnall's team as executive producer, taking the place of departing exec Brian Minchin. Strevens has produced many successful TV series, including **Misfits**, **Skins**, and 2013's **An Adventure in Space and Time**, the one-off drama by Mark Gatiss that told the story of **Doctor Who**'s beginnings. We congratulate Strevens on his new job, and look forward to seeing where he and Chibnall take the Doctor.

A Target for Tommy

Tommy Donbavand, **Doctor Who** author and creator of CBBC's **Scream Street**, was recently diagnosed with cancer and the effect this has had on his ability to visit schools has severely dented his family's income, so Obverse Books have put together a **Doctor Who**-themed short story collection in order to support him. Inspired by Target's much-loved **Who** books, **A Target for Tommy** features stories from contributors including Paul Cornell and Paul Magrs, and is available from Obverse's website now.

Barrowman Wants to Bring Back TORCHWOOD

Speaking at San Diego Comic-Con, John Barrowman, aka Captain Jack Harkness, teased a potential return for **Who** spin-off **Torchwood**: *"I have already set the ball rolling to get Torchwood back. I have a first telephone conversation on Monday about moving it forward to see how we can get it back on television."* Barrowman went on to say that the best way fans can show support for a new series is by buying the new **Torchwood** comic, which is written by, erm, John and Carole Barrowman. Read what you will into that. **Torchwood** was last seen on TV with 2011's fourth series, subtitled **Miracle Day**, but has recently been continued through Big Finish audios as well as the aforementioned comic, published by Titan.

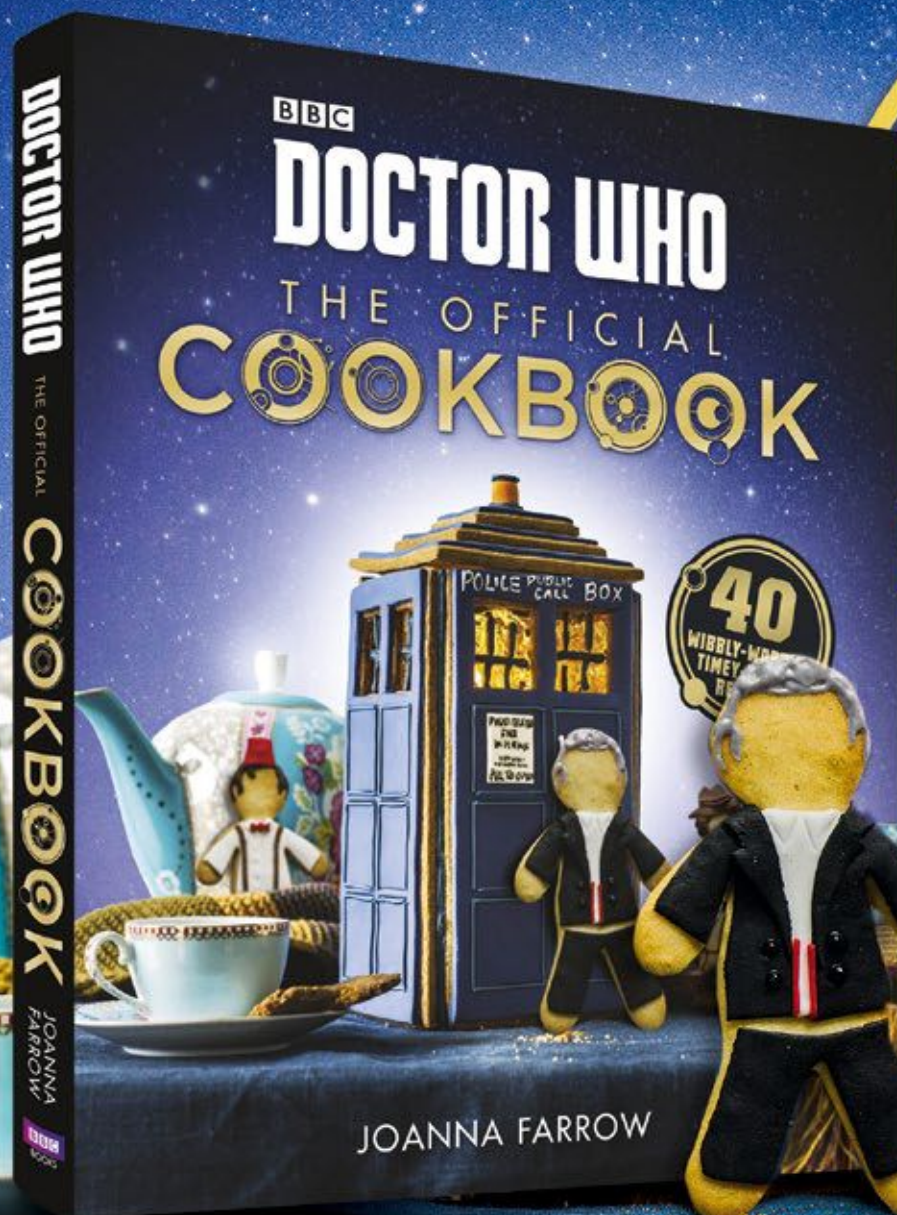
TV Movie Gets Blu-ray Release

The 1996 television movie, starring Paul McGann in his only full-length screen appearance as the Eighth Doctor, is to be released on Blu-ray for the first time. Also starring Daphne Ashbrook as Grace Holloway and Eric Roberts as the Master, this new release comes not long after the film's twentieth anniversary, which was in May. The two-disc set will be available from September 19th in the UK, with international release dates yet to be announced.



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BOOKS



TO BOLDLY TRAVEL THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

Seasoned *Star Trek* viewers looking for a route into *Doctor Who* could do worse than to apply the familiarity principle - but where does that begin? As William Shatner's James Tiberius Kirk had command of the Starship Enterprise, former novice monk and building site labourer Thomas Stewart Baker's Fourth Doctor is at the TARDIS (a *Who* mainstay) console for *The Invisible Enemy*, notable also for the introduction of Spock-like robot dog K-9, reliant on logic - as was old pointy-ears! Incidentally, there are more than a few links, however tenuous, between this story and a similar battle for the Vulcan's own noggin...

You will perhaps remember that lady surgeon beaming aboard and surgically removing the prized bodily centre of operations. For the Doctor, though, things are a bit more like *Fantastic Voyage*, as he and newest companion Leela are shrunk down in order to fight the Swarm, led by the Nucleus.

So begins perhaps the oddest medical examination ever recorded...

DOCTOR: Hello, Lalee.

LEELA: Are you all right?

DOCTOR: Rightly perfect, thank you yet, Lalee.

LEELA: What did you say?

DOCTOR: I said, I'm perfectly all right, thank you, Lalee.

LEELA: My name is Leela.

DOCTOR: Hmm? I know your name. Leela.

LEELA: What happened?

DOCTOR: Must have had a bot of a shik.

LEELA: What?

DOCTOR: A bot of a shik.

LEELA: Doctor, what is it? What's the matter?

DOCTOR: There's a voice or something in my head.

LEELA: The evil thing.

DOCTOR: Nonsense. Just a nasty turn.

And Professor Marius and his medical team will soon establish two important details for the first-time viewer. Namely, the patient has two hearts and a self-renewing cell structure, meaning that he can, in effect, cheat death by means of regeneration, enabling a complete change

of physical appearance and personality in the process. His current and rather Bob Dylan-ish appearance is the result of the latest of these, though the companion (another *Doctor Who* constant) who stayed with him to ease his transition from a velvet-shirted dandy has by now also departed.

That was in *The Hand of Fear*, and her name was Sarah Jane Smith. Following just the one story travelling solo, *The Deadly Assassin*, Leela of the Sevateem tribe joined him at the conclusion of *The Face of Evil*... after he'd fixed a computer with a god complex! He will



later encounter Kirk for himself in the crossover comic *Assimilation*, as he helps the Original Series crew against the beginnings of an alliance between the Borg and Cybermen - a vulnerability to gold, as established in *Revenge Of The Cybermen*, helping their cause no end.

Cyber technology of a different nature, and also familiar to Trekkies in a sense, would appear once more within six further regenerations. Having shed the scarf long ago, and finding himself in wartime London, his Ninth incarnation and Rose Tyler - Leela off the scene for a while by now - will find themselves chasing nanogenes, similar to *Trek*'s nanites. It's a mauve alert, and no mistake!

ROSE: *What's the emergency?*

DOCTOR: *It's mauve.*

ROSE: *Mauve?*

DOCTOR: *The universally recognised colour for danger.*

ROSE: *What happened to red?*

DOCTOR: *That's just humans. By everyone else's standards, red's camp. Oh, the misunderstandings. All those red alerts, all that dancing. It's got a very basic flight computer. I've hacked in, slaved the TARDIS. Where it goes, we go.*

ROSE: *And that's safe, is it?*

DOCTOR: *Totally.*

Indeed, the nanogenes were originally to be named after their equivalent in *The Next Generation*, before Series One script editor Helen Raynor, who would go on to write *The Sontaran Stratagem/The Poison Sky* for noted *Trek* fan Christopher Eccleston's successor David Tennant, noted the similarity and forced a name change. Both were for medical purposes, at least...

And take note of the nickname Captain Jack Harkness bestows upon the Doctor, too: "*Mister Spock?*" A great little moment for Eccleston, writer Steven Moffat perhaps having taken note of his enthusiasm for the other great bastion of sci-fi.

While even the sonic screwdriver couldn't get the man he would play for just one series, under showrunner Russell



T Davies after they'd worked together on ITV's *The Second Coming*, out of his predicament when he was inhabiting his Baker-era body during *The Invasion Of Time*, it does come in handy having been restored to its rightful place in his pockets following the end of a sort-of ban on its use from *The Visitation* onwards, which followed Tom's exit in *Logopolis*, Peter Davison taking over and replacing the Dylan look with a little vintage cricket chic.

JACK: *Okay. This can function as a sonic blaster, a sonic cannon, and as a triple-enfolded sonic disrupter. Doc, what you got?*

DOCTOR: *I've got a sonic, er... Oh, never mind.*

JACK: *What?*

DOCTOR: *It's sonic, okay? Let's leave it at that.*

JACK: *Disrupter? Cannon? What?*

DOCTOR: *It's sonic! Totally sonic! I am soniced up!*

JACK: *A sonic what?!*

DOCTOR: *Screwdriver!*

Examining Rose after her dangle from a barrage balloon, he quickly works out what caused her miraculous recovery. "*Sub-atomic robots. There's millions of them in here, see? Burned my hand on the console when we landed. All better now. They activate when the bulkhead's sealed. Check you out for damage, fix any physical flaws.*"

Which has caused anyone injured to take on the mannerisms and gas-masked appearance of the first person they treated, the titular empty child looking for his mummy. All a side effect of former Time Agent Captain Jack's little scam, the Agency and its operatives having been first referenced in another Baker story, *The Talons Of Weng-Chiang*, *Doctor Who*'s take on the sort of mystery usually reserved for Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

Yet Eccleston used the press conference to announce his casting back in 2005 to distance himself from the sort of eccentricity embodied by Baker, stressing that his take would not be "*as eccentric and as foppish as he was in some of his incarnations*", with his choice of costume a reaction against what had gone before into the bargain. "*I didn't want the costume to be my performance*", as he put it.

Davies would add, "*He travels in time and space, he's got two hearts, he's a Time Lord— that's eccentric enough to be getting on with*".

Certainly from the perspective of the *Trek*-minded viewer?

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



LIVVY BOOTE is...

THE GIRL FROM PLANET X



Bones: "Coochi coochi coo!" Spock: "Coochi... coochi... coo?"

A while back, in one of my earliest *Girl from Planet X* articles, we considered whether *Star Trek* is still relevant - its outlook on feminism in particular. The answer I came up with was: yes, sort of. Mostly. To viewers living in the 21st century there are certainly bits of it which are dated, but it was also hugely progressive for its time, including a woman of colour on the bridge of the Enterprise.

But as we all know with *Star Trek*, it likes to offer ambiguities. In this way, it provides us some truly thought-provoking episodes that make you wonder what the right answer really is, whether Kirk made the right choices. It invites us to contemplate humanity, and its place in the universe. Considering that the show likes to take this sort of angle, sometimes it's really, seriously hard to just say 'oh yes, this is feminist' or 'no, no, this is not feminist at all'. In fact, I don't think that's the way to go about it all, especially when we don't fully understand the writers' motives.

With that in mind, I thought it would be appropriate to look at a specific episode of *Star Trek*, not only because of its anniversary, but also because it is, for me, an especially complex one.

In *Friday's Child*, the Enterprise enter orbit of the planet Capella IV to negotiate the terms of a mining contract. Bones has been there before and knows the ropes, assuring Kirk and Spock that everything will run smoothly if they

observe the Capellan customs. When they arrive, one of their redshirts is shockingly killed as he instinctively aims his phaser at an unexpected Klingon. From this point, Kirk and co. try hard to follow the Prime Directive and be careful to respect the planet's customs, but find it difficult after their innocent crewman's death. As Capellan society becomes chaotic with riots, the pregnant wife of the leader - the Teer - is endangered. Despite the rule that the Teer's wife must

never be touched by another man, Bones, Kirk, and Spock drag her away to safety. She is outraged.

Over the course of the episode, Bones makes it clear that he will give her a helping hand, and that he will examine the pregnant woman, Eleen, if he sees it fit. In the end, she seems to find this unusual intimacy with a man quite exciting, enjoying his touch. She even designates unborn child as Bones', not even her own.

I find this episode interesting for a lot of reasons. Throughout, the three Enterprise crew members try very hard to follow the Prime Directive and observe Capellan culture without argument, even after they discover that they have been double-crossed and one of their crewman killed on the spot. In general, they do pretty well. What I'm most interested in, of course, is how they treat Eleen in the episode.

When I watch *Friday's Child*, I always find myself conflicted. Should the crew have let Eleen die, as per the rules of Capella society after the Teer has died? Should they have touched her, despite her desperation to avoid it? Should they have got involved? Of course, the whole argument of the Prime Directive is that they shouldn't. As an exception, it also states that the crew ought to involve themselves in an emergency situation. Did saving a Capellan woman fall under that exception?

I'm not so sure it did. Eleen was prepared to die, as per her customs, and yet without a second thought, the crew saved her. But does that make them presumptuous, arrogant even? Was it so wrong?



Eleen and her husband, the Tier.

AFTER 50 YEARS, THE STAR TREK FEMINIST DEBATE LIVES ON...

Now you may be wondering why this is a feminist issue in particular; in my opinion, this episode is a very close parallel to how we might view women in the Middle East, particularly Muslim women. Westerners are often morally outraged by the fact that women are either obliged, or perhaps expected, to cover their head. Whether it be a hijab, a niqab, or a burka, for many of us it symbolises the idea that women must hide themselves in shame. In actual fact, most people who think this won't know anything about Muslim culture. They will assume that the women who wear these items of clothing are willingly subjecting themselves to an oppressive patriarchy. It is an incredibly patronising way to view an entire culture when most people can't be arsed to really learn about it.

As a feminist, I myself sometimes struggle with the way women are treated in other countries, but it is also essential to remember that it is not my culture, therefore it is not my place to 'fix' it. On the other hand, when I hear about the girls who suffer genital mutilation in Africa, I feel that I must do something. I donate money, whilst other people go there themselves to set up charities. A custom like this, to us, goes beyond the line of what we can rightly accept.

In the case of *Friday's Child*, I support the decision of the crew to save Eelen. She decides to follow the crew later on, agreeing that to live is preferable to the alternative, despite it being tradition. Bones, on more than one occasion, asks her if she actually wants them to help - they don't assume. The



Bones does not appreciate Eelen slapping him in the face, and retaliates.

three of them regularly give her the option to deny their interference and go her own way. In the end, it seems they respect her choice to follow these foreign soldiers, or follow her own customs.

After a lot of thought and after changing my mind a few times, I feel that Bones, Kirk, and Spock went about the situation rather well. Then again, as a Doctor, Bones doesn't always seem to realise that Eelen has a choice in whether she wants to be treated by him. After he touches her and tries to

examine the unborn baby, she slaps him several times, feeling violated. He then slaps her back.

Was this the right thing to do? I'm not so sure. He should have listened to her, not just because she was a woman under some fairly strict laws not to be touched, but because Bones ought to have gained permission to examine her - not slapped her back so that she'd be shocked into submission. This scene must have been seriously shocking in the '60s - a man hitting a woman? Surely not! But if you ask me, it's pretty controversial now. On this occasion, I'm not certain Bones made the right decision.

After Eelen reluctantly gives birth to her baby, demanding that it be Bones' now, it's clear that women in this society aren't even given responsibility for their own children. As Bones himself says, the men take all the credit for that, too. But at what point is it OK to interfere with a foreign society's customs? At what point is it morally correct to cross the line and help someone? At what point is 'help' just a euphemism for 'my rules are better than yours, let me get in the way'?

Star Trek has always made me think about big questions like this, and I don't necessarily think you're meant to come up with an easy answer, either; I doubt Rodenberry had one. But one thing is certain - these questions haven't become any less relevant in the 21st century. ✦



Bones examines Eelen's unborn child.

STARBURST LOOKS FORWARD TO SAUSAGE PARTY, THE ADULT-AIMED ANIMATION FROM THE MINDS OF SETH ROGEN AND CO.

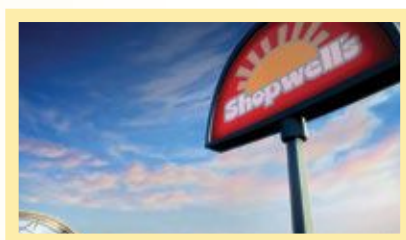


SAUSAGE

Life is a sonofabitch sometimes. We go through school and either get bullied or have a general crap time and then grow up and go to work, all the meantime running into folk who drive us near to insane... and don't even get us started on bills, traffic, self-service tills and politics! But hey, at least we are not food. Food gets a bad wrap (ba-dum-tss) for being either fattening, tasteless or whatever, but for the items on your shelf, life is all leading up to that one moment where they come home with us, unaware they won't be going to a better place, in fact they'll be going into an orifice (don't be filthy minded, please!). Thus is the general subject for *Sausage Party*, a film that will invite many a phallic pun (stay tuned) but which takes a *Toy Story*-esque approach, had the Pixar crew been high and made their film spouting more expletives than a pissed docker. *Sausage Party* is an animated feature aimed at grown-ups, both in its delivery and its ideology. So what is this strange movie? Where was it sourced? Who is behind its manufacturing? And will it be worth porking out on?



The general idea of food as living characters unaware of their grisly but tasty fate sounds pretty simplistic but from what we know so far, there will be



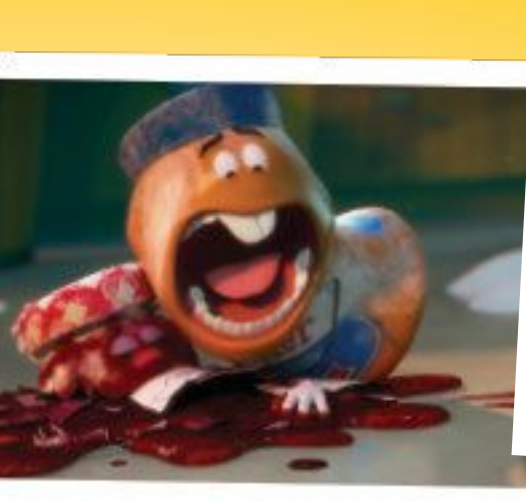
a lot more than that central concept to digest. Set in a supermarket called Shopwell's, Frank (Seth Rogen) is a simple sausage living a peaceful life among the other groceries at the store. All he and his friends want is to go home with a customer; however, as the 4th of July shopping spree arrives, Frank becomes aware of the ugly truth behind his existence and is compelled to act. But how will he, his bun girlfriend Brenda (Kristen Wiig) and their friends escape their fate of being gnashed, crunched, and digested? *Sausage Party* started as a very innocent idea, when funnyman Seth Rogen and his partner in crime Evan Goldberg thought about what would happen if our food had feelings. Needless to say, it didn't take them long to realise it would be severely f'ed up. Actually, that is just how they put it themselves.

The brainchild of Rogen and Goldberg, *Sausage Party* is Rogen's first written work for an animated feature and what a deranged first step it is. Directed by *Monsters vs. Aliens*' (which Rogen co-starred in) Conrad Vernon and Thomas & Friends' (quite a change) Greg Tiernan, *Sausage Party* is the first theatrically-released R-rated animated feature since 2007's *Aqua Teen Hunger Force Colon Movie Film for Theaters* and the first CGI

R-Rated animation ever. And it is not hard to see why because, excluding breakout hits like *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*, adult animation is usually the playground for impressive international anime, straight-to-disc graphic novel/comic book adaptations or cult works from directors like Ralph Bakshi. So we can understand why studios didn't see the sizzle in this big sausage. However, after years of meat and greets (ahem), Rogen's attempts at getting the film greenlit have paid off.

Produced by Rogen, Goldberg, Vernon, Jonah Hill, and Megan Ellison (who has produced an array of Academy Award-winners and contenders such as *Zero Dark Thirty*, *American Hustle*, and *Her*) and distributed by Columbia Pictures, it seems like *Sausage Party* certainly has a 100% organic cinema pedigree stamped across its meaty areas. The journey taken to get people on board with a film about foul-mouthed food was not an easy one but here we are. And despite the initial thoughts that the film was a hoax, this bizarre prospect has developed since 2010 into a rather anticipated chunk of cinematic nosh. But aside from the strange concept, what more can we expect from this saucy sausage fest, that is the combined effort of Nitrogen Studios Canada, Annapurna





FEST!

BY JACK
BOTTOMLEY



Pictures, Point Grey Pictures, and Sony Pictures Imageworks?

Well, long before Pixar told their *Toy Story* or Illumination Entertainment ruminated on *The Secret Life of Pets*, Walt Disney Animation Studios had constantly given voices to animals, creatures or even appliances (*Fantasia*) but none of the above is playing in the same ballpark as this. *Sausage Party* openly mocks the conventions of the aforementioned and the playfulness of their stories. The

first look we had of the film took devious delight in starting with a pleasant, visually beaming happiness before turning into an American horror story that was akin to *Hostel* as envisioned by Gordon Ramsay. The moment when a happy Scottish sounding potato (voiced by co-director Tiernan) is skinned alive (known as peeled to we humans) and children (baby carrots) are mercilessly chomped to death, is straight out of our pork-fed nightmares.

Swear, crude, lewd and with some genuinely shocking imagery, this party is certainly one that may have you rethinking that extra hot dog. It is little wonder those poor little buggers at the Brendan Concorc 14 multiplex in California were alarmed and scattering like minnows when the cinema mistakenly showed the red band trailer before their family screening of *Finding Dory*. It was a story that recently made headlines, though Rogen tweeted that the news, 'made his day'... in the

words of *Shrek*'s Gingerbread man, Mr. Rogen, 'You're a monster!' Seriously though, we don't envy those parents, bet that was a difficult trip home, "so kids, who's for some fries from McDonalds?"

However, for all the cartoonish sausage slaughter, scenes of a post-war afflicted Twinkie (voiced by other co-director Vernon) and a narrative insinuating a food rebellion, perhaps the greatest pull factor for this unhinged, barmy and potentially hilarious film is its existential angle. Laugh all you want but there may be a lot more



substance to this huge banger than meats the eye! Frank's discovery of his, and his friends' lot in life is the gateway for the film to tackle some truly far reaching, perhaps even top-shelf-level issues: ideas of fate, the meaning of life and even the questioning of faith. Early reviews have certainly suggested that in addition to being a transgressive, constantly hilarious, and relentless film, it also deals with such strong debates as these. Not to mention some neat references to other genres and films - the trailer alone features a fabulously realised homage to *Saving Private Ryan* and a cheeky moment reminiscent of *Pineapple Express*. The screenplay is a combined effort of Rogen, Goldberg, Kyle Hunter, and Ariel Shaffir



(the latter of whom are both regular producers on other Rogen projects and co-writers for *The Night Before*) and from the looks of it, it will meat the approval of many (too much?).

Also joining in the party is a brilliant cast of big name talents that ought to ensure the film isn't playing ketchup when it comes to star power [okay, now that is too much - Ed]. Rogen is obviously starring as the sausage with a plan Frank and the bun to his wiener is Ghostbuster Kristen Wiig (as Brenda the bun). However, also lining the casting aisle shelves are Jonah Hill and Michael Cera as fellow sausages Carl and Barry, Bill Hader (*Paul*, *Inside Out*, *Trainwreck*) as a guacamole and a character called Firewater (who is a bottle of liquor... jealous), David Krumholtz (the *Harold & Kumar* series) is Vash the lavash, James Franco plays a piece of toast, Craig Robinson (*Pineapple Express*, *Hot Tub Time Machine*) is Mr. Gifts (a box of gifts, well guessed!), Paul Rudd voices the tantalisingly titled tomato Nicky Da Vinci, and Danny McBride (*This is The*



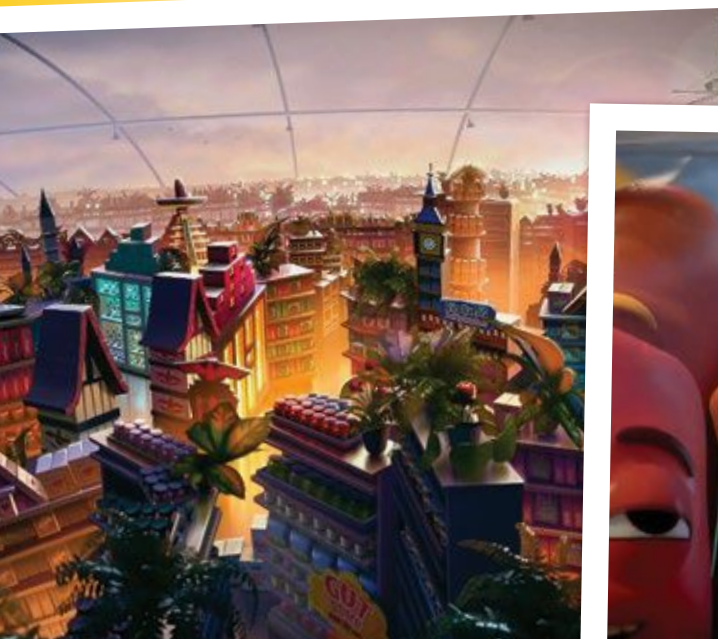
End and the upcoming *Alien: Covenant*) is Honey Mustard, who we are sure will squirt all over somebody at some point. Oh, and Nick Kroll (TV's *Kroll Show*) is playing Douche (a reference to his *Parks and Recreation* character, perhaps?), which ought to be something nice for his CV. Then there are some succulent appearances by the great Edward Norton as Sammy Bagel Jr. and the seemingly ageless Salma Hayek as Teresa Taco, rounding off the final names in what has to be the winner of STARBURST's inaugural 'movie with the best-named characters of the year' award.

So with all the wacky characters, profane gags and indecent use of hot dogs, *Sausage Party* looks to be an entertainingly insulting blast of entertainment from Sony. A rough cut (the jokes are really writing themselves here, aren't they?) of the film screened earlier this year at Texas' South by Southwest Film Festival and early word has thus far been universally positive for what just might be the most ridiculous film of this year, and considering this film has arrived in the same year as *Gods of Egypt* that is quite the feat. *Sausage Party* promises a lot of the usual foul-mouthed

stoner antics we have come to expect from this naughty bunch of American comedians, as well as using the silliness of its core concept as much as possible. However, it is really the depth to this meaty soirée that is the most intriguing prospect. In a year where Donald Trump has garnered presidential momentum, Britain voted out of the EU, people have gone running around towns catching virtual Pokémon, and *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie* bested *Zoolander 2* in quality, can we finally etch 2016 in the record books as officially the oddest year ever? C'mon people, we may get a philosophical life lesson from a talking sausage, what the hell was in that garnish at New Years?!



You can fork out to see **SAUSAGE PARTY** as it penetrates the bun of the UK cinema release schedule on September 2nd.





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WHERE NO ONE CAN FIND YOU

BY CHRIS HAYDON

After several cinematic misfires, **TIM BURTON** returns with another adaptation that will hopefully return the director back into the hearts of the movie-going public.



They say you should never judge a book by its cover, but what about its title?

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children is quite the mouthful, but those six words speak volumes about the pages that lie inside. Before you have even started the prologue, it is clear that readers will be in for a weird and wonderful ride. It was also pretty safe to presume that as with much young adult fantasy fiction, it would receive the silver screen treatment too.

Well, in 2016, such an adaptation is on its way, and with a title such as this, there really is only one filmmaker who springs instantaneously to mind: Tim Burton. The postmodern author of Gothic fairy tale cinema, he is unmistakably the definitive choice for such a project, even before we

know a great deal about it. *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* is just the most Tim Burton-esque title ever devised.

One of the most prolific and iconic auteurs at work today, Burton is frequently undervalued by the film community. Many are too quick to comment on his prolonged creative relationship with actor Johnny Depp, citing films such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) as opposed to, say, *Ed Wood* (1994) and *Big Fish* (2003). Many are also too quick to label Burton as a 'one trick pony' as opposed to praising his unique and signature style.

It is easy to forget that Burton has been a prevalent force in Hollywood studio filmmaking since the mid-eighties and

has been an active role in the creative processes of a plethora of works from the industry's elite. He is a director, screenwriter, producer, animator, storyboard artist, designer, and even an actor. In fact, Burton has such a detailed knowledge of the foundations of film that labelling and judging his outputs based on the odd misstep is frankly outrageous. Scorsese and Spielberg have made bad films too, you know?

That said, it is impossible to argue against Burton's thematic strengths when placed behind the lens or seated at the round table, and that is in the obscure and the fantastical. He can tell a poetic and profound story of outsiders finding their place in society, no matter how unusual, with equal parts melancholy and all-consuming joy. From *Beetlejuice* (1988) to *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and beyond, Burton binds a lyrical portrait of those who don't quite fit the mould.

He is equally attentive - and, well... unhinged - when telling stories for the younger generation. Burton's films are often stationed firmly on the edge of childlike wonder, always threatening to plummet to the depths of something much darker, deeper, and considerably more adult. But with this mentality, he has built an immeasurable reputation and brand; something we instantaneously associate with him and his vision. A great source of reference would be his animated works - predominately produced by Burton and directed by the modern master of stop-motion Henry Selick.





Films such as 1993's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach* (1996), and *Coraline* (2009) indicate just how clinical Burton is at tapping into the beguiling grey areas of a young person's psyche. He understands that children are weirdly fascinated by fear and the thought of it, yet he knows the limitations of his consumer and target demographic.

Coraline is unequivocally one of the scariest films and novels - penned by the legendary Neil Gaiman - of recent times, and technically, it's 'family friendly'. It has a subplot that sees the removal of human eyeballs and the stitching of shirt buttons into the sockets; if that isn't demented and depraved, then we don't know what is. Much like *Goosebumps* author R. L. Stine, Burton has a manner of approach that can instill awe and wonder into the horror that makes it palatable; so much so, that you long for a second serving.

After a brief hiatus from chilling little ones with his exceptional 2014 historical biopic *Big Eyes*, which landed a variety of Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations (including a Best Actress - Motion Picture Comedy or Musical win for Amy Adams), Burton returns to his macabre roots with this big-screen version of Ransom Riggs' 2011 debut novel.

An ode to the awkward and unusual, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* tells the saga of young Jacob Portman, an impressionable sixteen-year-old boy



who accidentally lands himself a pivotal role at the titular establishment. The wayward, derelict orphanage is managed by the eponymous Miss Peregrine, who tasks Jacob with the job of caring for and ultimately protecting the Peculiar Children from the relentless threats that linger outside - known as Wights and Hollowgasts.

These fearsome foes have but a single purpose: to hunt and kill Peculiars. They show no mercy nor remorse, and thrive from an insatiable bloodlust to rid the landscape of those tucked away in this mysterious location situated on a isolated Welsh island.

The many residents inside Miss Peregrine's walls have some particularly uncanny abilities, from the extraordinary to the downright bizarre. There's Emma Bloom, a lighter-than-air teenager who can control air, and create bubbles that insulate air underwater, but there's a slight catch: she must be attached to a rope and be anchored by steel shoes to keep her



from floating away.

Then there is Enoch O'Connor, who has the power to bring dead things back to life for a short period of time; Millard Nullings, who is gifted with invisibility; Bronwyn Buntley, a young girl with superhuman strength; and Olive Abroholos Elephanta, who can produce fire from her hands.

But some of the children's supernatural skills are head-scratching in their oddity. Young Claire Densmore has an extra mouth hidden under her hair at the back of her head, whilst Fiona Frauenfeld can summon plants to grow from the ground. And then things get really weird. Horace Somusson can fathom truly horrifying but prophetic dreams, and Hugh Apiston? Well, he has a complex affinity with bees; so much so that a hive of them live inside his stomach.





Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children looks simply riotous; a cavalcade of creativity that's brimming with originality and trademark Burtonisms. On face value, it seems both poignant and personal, yet with a sprawling sense of environment and landscape as the director surges through the many rooms and secrets of the orphanage. It also looks set to be supercharged with action set pieces and enlarged sequences such as deep-sea dives, as well as Burton's signature humour, which shows that the director hasn't forgotten to place his tongue firmly in cheek, even when things take a much darker, sinister turn.

Most interestingly, however, it seems as though the output from studio and distributor 20th Century Fox is keeping the really important details clouded in mystery. Some of the characters are either absent or barely referenced in the trailers, and a large percentage of the content available now merely highlights the Peculiar's abilities, as opposed to any information or detail about them and how they came to attain these powers. With so many major films spoiled these days thanks to endless advertising and

branding, it is a genuine pleasure to see an obscure mainstream movie like this wishing to remain as such.

Riggs' source novel has been adapted by screenwriter Jane Goldman, who has already transformed some fantastic literature onto the silver screen; *Kick-Ass*, *The Woman in Black*, and *Kingsman: The Secret Service* all sit proudly in her ever-growing roster. The original text was initially intended to be a picture book not too dissimilar to Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* - but with a focus on vernacular photographs from Riggs' collection as opposed to illustrations. However, advice from an editor at publishing house Quirk Books made the author change his mind and instead use his photographs as a

reference guide to progress a narrative. The use of photographs is a prevalent force in the story as Jacob sources his grandfather's snapshots, which lead him on an adventure that takes him to the large orphanage. The book became a New York Times bestseller and received critical acclaim upon its release. Since then, Riggs has penned two additional novels in the *Miss Peregrine* series - *Hollow City* in 2014 and *Library of Souls* in 2015.

Burton's adaptation was originally slated for a July 2015 release but was subjected to several date shifts, with the latest being Christmas Day 2016, before being moved forward to the film's now official release: September 30th, 2016. Principal photography began in February last year across the Tampa Bay area, shooting





in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties in Florida before production moved to the United Kingdom where the shooting was staged in Cornwall and Blackpool. A number of sequences were also captured in Belgium later in 2015.

In typical style of the Hollywood icon, Burton's film offers a sprawling ensemble cast made up of international talent from all walks of life. Burton alumni Eva Green (*Dark Shadows* - 2012) plays the titular role of Miss Peregrine whilst Asa Butterfield - interestingly, the star of Martin Scorsese's *Hugo Cabret* adaptation - takes on the leading role of Jacob.

In a recent interview, Burton commented on his orphanage orchestrator: "*Miss Peregrine is a weird Mary Poppins-like character - a strong and mysterious person who looks like she could turn into a bird,*" he said.

Meanwhile, screen royalty Samuel L. Jackson, likely still the most prolific performer working today, stars as Barron, one of the Wights that aim to capture and slay the children, while Allison Janney takes a break from the funny to occupy Dr.

Golan - a fearsome Wight and a master of disguise. Other big name players involved include Chris O'Dowd as Franklin Portman, Jacob's father; Terence Stamp as Abraham Portman, Jacob's grandfather; Rupert Everett and Kim Dickens (whose roles are currently undisclosed); and Dame Judi Dench as Miss Avocet, the wise mentor of Miss Peregrine.

And then there's the unusual residents, of which the director was a little trepidatious in the initial stages. "*I was a little worried about working with so many kids again,*" Burton said, "*but they were all such professionals on set. You would never believe that it was some of these kids' first big film.*"

Ella Purnell stars as float-away Emma, with Lauren McCrostie and Cameron King playing fiery Olive and invisible Millard respectively. Pixie Davies, Georgia Pemberton, Finlay MacMillan, Milo Parker, Raffiella Chapman, Hayden Keeler-Stone, and Louis Davison round off the remainder of the Peculiar clan.

Four-time Academy Award nominee Bruno Delbonnel takes on cinematography duties, which will see his third partnership with Burton after working on *Big Eyes* and *Dark Shadows*. Composers and music editors Mike Hingham and Matthew Margeson are on audio duties for the director again after playing vital roles in his films such as 2012's *Frankenweenie*, 2005's *Corpse Bride*, and 2007's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children is set to open alongside Peter Berg's dramatic thriller *Deepwater Horizon* and John Lee Hancock's McDonald's biopic *The Founder*. In industry terms, this means that Burton's bewitching film could almost certainly top the box office as it will not be fending off any real blockbuster



competition. A release outside of the summer months means the film will not suffer at the hands of over-crowding and will likely reach an extended viewership, and that truly is something to celebrate.

But what's more celebratory is welcoming another offering from the master of his craft into the young adult market. Burton can cast a dazzling spell, one which enchants, terrifies and inspires, and his forthcoming adaptation looks certain to offer all of those traits and much more. Miss Peregrine may only open her doors to the Peculiar, but the real oddity would be those not supremely excited for this picture.

MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN reaches UK cinemas in 3D and 2D on September 30th.



SUBSPACE RELAY

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE
WORLDS OF
STAR TREK
WITH IAIN
ROBERTSON



First Look at Discovery

Following months of speculation (including in these pages), Comic-Con finally gave the world the first preview of the upcoming CBS series, as well as confirming its title as **Star Trek: Discovery**. Following a 50th anniversary panel in Hall H, featuring the likes of William Shatner and Brent Spiner, executive producer Bryan Fuller unveiled a teaser trailer for the new series. The short clip shows the titular spaceship leaving a spacedock. As was quickly noted by fans, the design of the ship – featuring the familiar saucer section and a flattened engineering section – is very similar to an unused Enterprise design by Ralph McQuarrie for the abandoned 1970s **Planet of the Titans** film. The ship's registry number, NCC-1031 precedes Kirk's Enterprise, and would therefore seem to set the series as taking place between **Enterprise** and The Original Series.

Fuller has also confirmed a couple of long-standing rumours about the show. The series does indeed take place in the Prime Universe rather than the timeline of the current movies, and it will eschew the standalone episodes traditionally favoured by the series, instead telling a continuing story. Fuller also went into more detail explaining the reasoning behind the name of the new series and ship:

"Discovery is so intrinsic as a concept to the philosophy of Star Trek, and it felt like it was a beautiful way to acknowledge that spirit. What Star Trek has provided to me is an inspiration on where we're going as a species and a planet, and has given so much hope for a better world, because we need it in the world we're living in right now. And we need curiosity, we need exploration, we need to find better versions of ourselves, and we need to discover better versions of ourselves."

No casting announcements were made at Comic-Con, although with the series due to go into production in autumn, expect to hear lots more news on **Discovery** in the coming months.

Whilst details on the series itself are still sparse, we finally know where we'll be able to view it. In a major coup for Netflix, the streaming service has bagged the exclusive rights to the series, making episodes of the new series available in 188 countries within 24 hours of their debut in the States.

Whilst we've known for ages that the new series will head straight for CBS's streaming service in the States, there'd been no news about the rest of the world. The Netflix agreement means they'll host the show pretty much everywhere, with the exceptions of the U.S. and Canada. Whilst it's all but inevitable the show will hit

DVD and Blu-ray, the Netflix agreement means it'll be some time, if ever, before it hits good old-fashioned TV.

The streaming service is rapidly becoming the home of **Trek** (we're copyrighting the name 'Trekflix' right now, just in case they get any ideas), adding all the previous series (yes, even animated) worldwide by the end of this year. They're all available to stream already in the UK, meaning if you start right now, you can just about catch up on every adventure before the new series lands in January, providing you never leave the house and give up sleep for the next five months.

Next movie will boldly go where no man has gone be-Thor

Mere days before **Beyond** landed in cinemas, Paramount not only announced a fourth movie in the rebooted series (or 'Kelvin Universe' as it's now officially known), but that it would feature Chris Pine's Kirk teaming up with his father George, again played by Chris Hemsworth.

George Kirk was killed off ten minutes into 2009's movie, but a minor thing like death never keeps a good character down in **Trek**; just ask Spock, Tasha Yar or hell, just about anyone. Although **Beyond** topped the U.S. box office on release, its \$59 million opening weekend was lower than either of the previous two films, and Paramount will doubtless be hoping that the addition of Hemsworth – whose role as a certain hammer-wielding Avenger has seen his career skyrocket since his **Trek** debut – will give the franchise a boost.

Although no director's yet been announced, the film's being written by J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay, who worked on the original unused script for the most recent film, alongside Roberto Orci.

Chris Pine and Zachary Quinto signed up to a fourth movie a while back, but it's not yet known about the rest of the cast, although it's all but inevitable they'll be returning. However, J. J. Abrams has confirmed that Chekov – played by Anton Yelchin – won't be recast, following the actor's tragic death in June.

Behind The Scenes of the Original Series

Along with the reveal of **Discovery**, the most exciting **Trek** news to come out of Comic-Con was a look at never before seen footage from the making of the classic series. **Star Trek: The**

Original Series – The Roddenberry Vault will be released on Blu-ray later this year, and is the result of a nine-year collaboration between Rod Roddenberry and Mike and Denise Okuda. The Okudas scoured thousands of hours of footage from the series, much of which hadn't been viewed in nearly half a century, and oversaw the restoration process.

Denise Okuda summed up the footage for Comic-Con as 'maybe a line of dialogue, an alternate take, things on the cutting room floor. This is a time capsule into when this show was made.'

"You get a sense of who the actors really are," said Mike Okuda, "like Nimoy before a take, directors giving direction, and behind the scenes moments."

50 years after the series was shot, to see both new scenes, and alternate versions of familiar ones is an enticing prospect for any fan of the show. The Blu-ray includes new interviews with William Shatner, D.C. Fontana and others who worked on the show. It also includes restored versions of several classic episodes which feature in the behind the scenes footage, including *The Trouble with Tribbles*, *City on the Edge of Forever*, and *Space Seed*.

It's Okay for Sulu to Be Gay, Unless You're George Takei

Of all the pre-release hype around **Star Trek Beyond** prior to its release, one story stood out as a bit bizarre. Following its first public screening in Sydney, word quickly circulated that the Sulu had become the franchise's first ever LGBT character, in tribute to George Takei.

Whilst this move - an idea of writer Simon Pegg - was largely welcomed by fans and **Trek** alumni alike, the main objection came from an unlikely source: Takei himself.

"Unfortunately, it's a twisting of Gene's creation, to which he put in so much thought. I think it's really unfortunate" Takei proclaimed, adding that Roddenberry conceived Sulu as heterosexual. The actor and LGBT activist was given the news by John Cho last year, and responded that he wished a new gay character had been added, instead of changing the nature of an existing character.

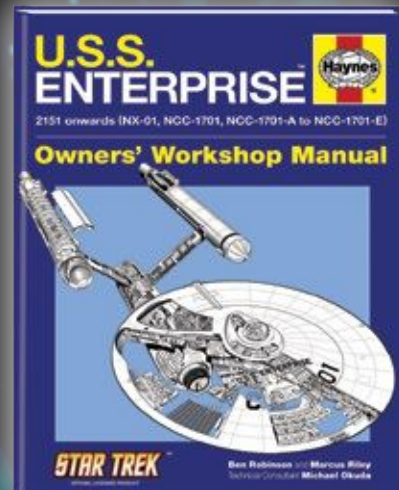
Although we can see Takei's point, we're not convinced he's right on this one. Besides the fact that Sulu's sexuality was never referred to in the series (this is a character who didn't officially get a first name for 25 years, let alone a love life), diversity is one of the central themes of the show. And whilst the scene in the finished film does somewhat smack of tokenism, after 50 years of exclusively heterosexual characters (the occasional Trill or androgynous species excepted), it's about bloody time.

TREK Hits Blackpool

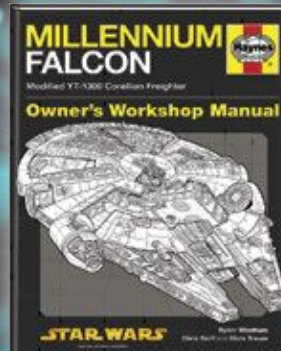
Star Trek's assorted crews have visited a number of unappealing locations over the years - Nimbus III, Rura Penthe, that one with the half-naked weirdos where Wesley got sentenced to death for falling on some flowers - but now it's visiting possibly its most inhospitable location yet [we're only kidding! - Ed]. **Star Trek: The Exhibition** is a new attraction in Blackpool, running until November. The exhibition boasts over 100 props and costumes from the series, many of which have never been seen before in the UK, as well as a full-size recreation of the classic Enterprise Bridge. Perhaps most intriguingly, the show features some props and costumes from the abandoned '70s Phase II series. And in September, a **Trek**-themed light will be added to Blackpool's illuminations. The STARBURST editorial team had a great afternoon there just after it opened, as you can see. You can read more about the exhibition at startrekblackpool.co.uk



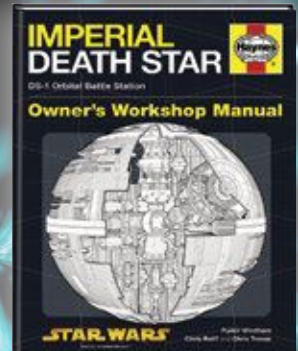
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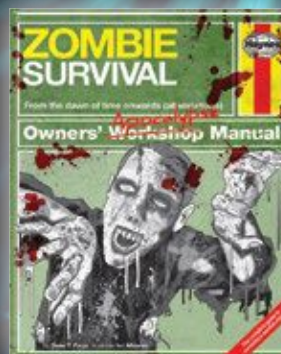
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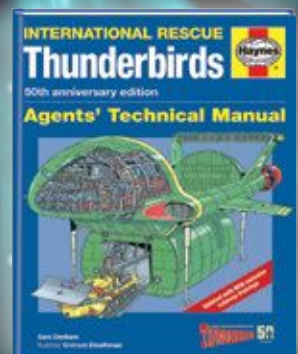
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THE TREKOLOGIST

From the desk
of The Horror
Channel's new
Trekologist
B. JONES



Star Trek Beyond, or how Star Trek found its funny bone...

Please note this includes spoilers about *Star Trek Beyond*!

Trekologist is a made-up word for a made-up job for somebody who knows far too much about **Star Trek**. That would be me. I have piles of merchandise, stacks of autographs and have spent 23 years running the SF Ball sci-fi convention. This column will be how I share my passion for this show in my own screwy perspective.

The original **Star Trek** used to be funny. It had giant white rabbits, a space station covered in tribbles, and the notorious Harry Mudd. Mr Chekov did a Russian dance, Spock hung from a tree, and Captain Kirk did his fingernails.

The new films have not noticed until now!

The latest film opens with Kirk appearing before the Teenaxi as a peace envoy. Unfortunately for Kirk, he is attacked by the tiny aliens and is beamed back to the ship still grappling with two of them. His comment *"I ripped my shirt again"* is a charming reminder of the number of times this happened in the original **Star Trek**. It was ripped whilst fighting Ben Finney and Gary Mitchell, sliced when battling Spock on Vulcan, torn by McCoy to administer medicine, and shredded by the Onlies, the children in the episode *Miri*. No wonder he has so many in his locker.

Teaming McCoy and Spock throughout the movie leads to some tremendous dialogue exchanges reminiscent of the 1960s series. McCoy calls Spock a *"green-blooded ingrate"* when he performs lifesaving surgery on Spock and then gets volunteered to pilot the alien spaceship. He also says - when Spock discusses leaving the crew - that he *"would throw a party to celebrate"*. Other previous insults have included *"Are you out of your Vulcan mind?"*, *"You*

bet your pointed ears I am" and *"I'm trying to thank you, you pointy-eared hobgoblin"*. Now this is classy dialogue!

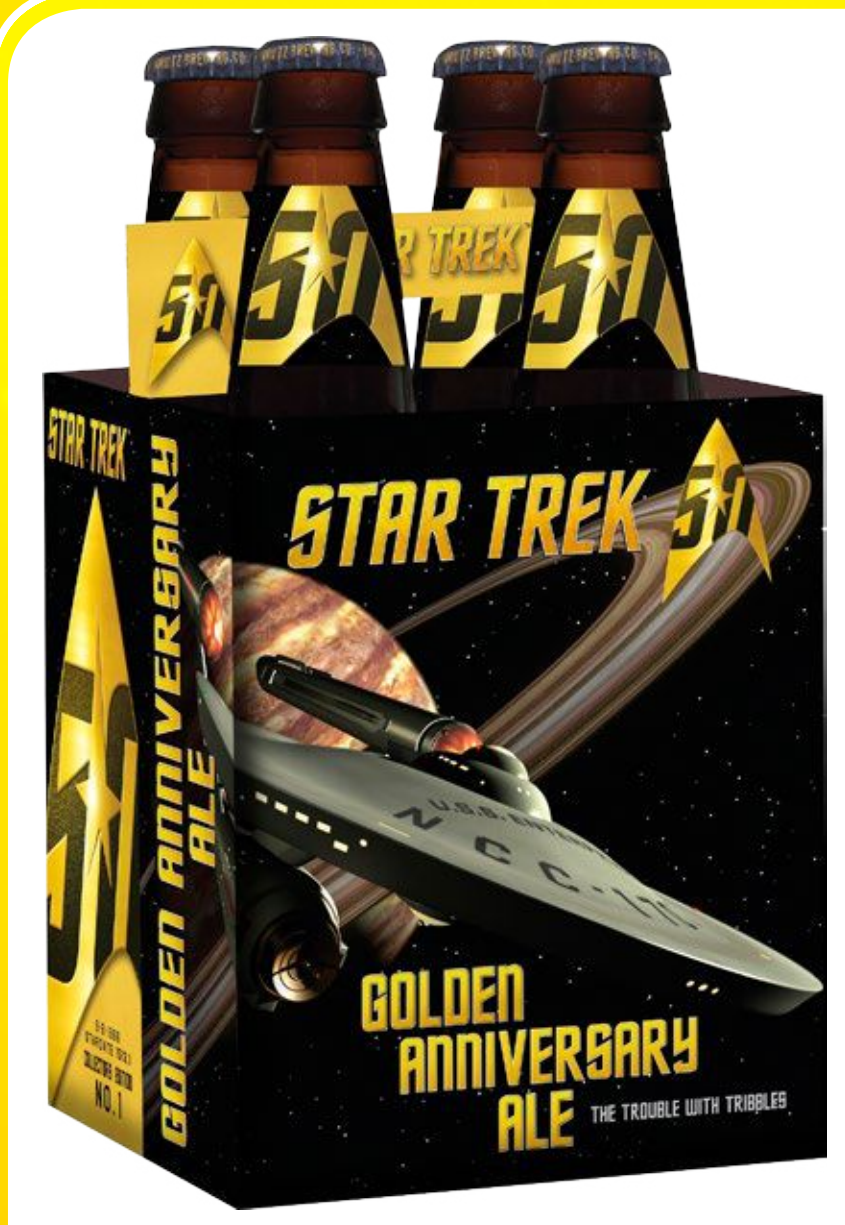
Even characters like Mr Chekov get a comedy line inspired from the past. At the Captain's birthday party, he tells his companion that *"scotch was invented by a little old lady in Russia"*. Chekov often announced that things were *"invented in Russia"* - despite the often overwhelming evidence to the contrary. This applied to everything from the new super grain Quadrottricale seen in *The Trouble with Tribbles* to the epic Russian poem Cinderella in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. Now, if we could only get his musclebound love interest Tamoon from *The Gamesters of Triskelion* back in there. *"Very nice to meet you... Miss?"*

The hands down winning reference comedy line was uttered by Mr Scott about what happened to the lost starship the USS Franklin. His various comments included it *"being gripped by a giant green space hand"*. This is a direct link to the episode *Who Mourns for Adonais?* where such a hand grabbed hold of the original Enterprise in orbit. For those of you still in the theatre during the end credits, a large green hand also appears there. Keep those eyes open!

There are plenty more references in the film that I haven't covered here but overall what we get is a film written by someone knowledgeable about the Roddenberry universe and, more importantly, the history of **Star Trek**. One where the human element has become as important as the epic space battles and where humour is not left behind at spacedock.

Keep on Trekkin'.





The crew and species of STAR TREK and the various offshoots have always had their watering holes to head to when they need to relax. Now, thanks to an enterprising brewery from the small town of Vulcan in Alta, Canada. STARBURST went to find out more about the FEDERATION OF BEER...

STARBURST: How did the company come about, and what inspired you to create *Star Trek*-themed ales?

Vern Raincock: I previously met Paul Carreau - a Federation founder - at an RFID technology presentation, and Paul suggested I approach Vulcan Tourism to supply beer and wine for Spock Days [the annual *Star Trek* convention held there].

It was 2008, and Spock Days

invited Eugene 'Rod' Roddenberry Jr., the son of *Star Trek* Creator Gene Roddenberry to unveil a plaque dedicated to his father. There, I used a Captain Kirk bobble-head as the tap handle for Captains Lager and Dr McCoy bobble-head as the tap handle for the 'Real McCoy Wit'. We worked with CBS and the town of Vulcan to get approval for a limited production run for the event.

As I was setting up a prototype 'Keg Eliminator' draft system, Mr. Roddenberry dropped in prior to the festival in the Vulcan Tourism office. Rod mentioned that he was a home brewer. Rod clearly enjoyed the Bavarian imported beer from Anker Brau that we supplied at the event. Rod's enthusiasm in our project was contagious and was the seed that encouraged us to seek approval to brew future Vulcan Ale recipes for Spock Days. Our wine that year was supplied by Hafner Wines of Austria and the Organic 'White Rabbit Chardonnay' was a hit with the guests of the meet and greet in 2008.

What's the process for selecting and making a great brew?

To make a great brew, we work with the best creative minds in the craft brewing community. We choose the best of ingredients and the results are evident in each pint that we pour. In the early '90s, I was working in Seattle for a grocery chain - and was converted to craft beer by Red Hook and Pike Brewing, two of the earliest craft brewers to set up shop in Seattle.

In 2002, Darren, a teammate in hockey and golf pro convinced me to import a Hefeweizen beer for his golf club. Since that time, I have had the good fortune to represent and befriend some of the world's finest brewers including Charles and Rose Ann Finkel of Pike Brewing in Seattle, Catherine Maxwell-Stuart of Traquair House in Scotland, Brian Titus of Garrison Brewing in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Jeremy Cowan of Shmaltz Brewing in Clifton Park, NY. Brian Titus of Garrison Brewing says, "*Star Trek* is just one of those rare things that *EVERYONE* relates to at some point in their lives. Whether it's a particular series, movie or character, there's always something that resonates with each of us. I'm an Original Series guy, but my younger girls are working through *Next Generation* and my sons all about the J. J. Abrams movies! We wanted to create beers that appealed to Trekkies and Beer Geeks alike. So far so good!"

Equally important, since that time, I've attended hundreds of beer festivals and spoken to fans of craft beer who are enthusiastic and always willing to provide suggestions along the way. When given the opportunity to brew Vulcan Ale under license in 2013, our founders agreed that whatever we brewed must be of best quality and we issued our Prime Directive: *To produce high quality Craft Beer, to honour Gene Roddenberry's legacy, and to unite both Star Trek and Craft Beer fans.*

Given that most of our friends in the industry love *Star Trek*, we decided to brew a new episode for each season and to encourage many of our brewery friends to 'collabrew' with us on our Five-Year Mission to explore strange new worlds and boldly brew where no beer has gone before. **What have been the most popular of your**



boldly brewed beers?

We have found success with each brew that we have released. Paul Carreau - known to members of KAG [Klingon Assault Group] as Qel'iv prefers Klingon Warnog from Halifax's Garrison Brewing. Dr. Richard Weger - our resident Tribble veterinarian - says that it's only logical that Vulcan Ale - The Genesis Effect gets the nod. I've begun work on a very strong brew to be released in late 2016/early 2017 that will really get your blood pumping (or, as they say in the neutral zone... 'plasma'). The first pilot batch turned out very well and we are set to launch this Bird (of Prey) soon! In a different reality, you could call it ale...

We see you're mostly distributed in the US and Canada, are there plans to bring the ales further afield? Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations is our Mission Statement. Interested brewers from Planet Earth should open a hailing frequency immediately and contact us. Our Mission is to seek out new brewers

and new recipes.

Being small batch brewers - we reached out to Martin Kec of Zatecky Pivovar in Zatec, Czech Republic to brew our Syndicate Lager, The Orion Seductress. It was released at *Destination Star Trek* in the UK and sold out immediately. This year, we intercepted communications that something is brewing with possible release date in October.

Have you had any feedback from any of the Trek cast on the drinks?

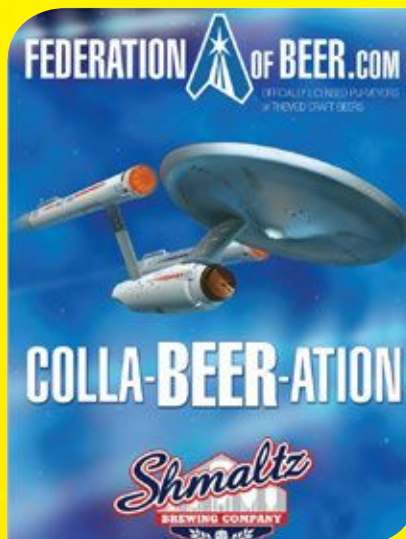
In Seattle, I was approached by the head of security at *Star Trek* Seattle. Denise Crosby has a close friend who owns a brewery in Iceland and she loves craft beer. Denise had heard about Vulcan Ale but had not tried it. I called our distributor in Seattle and he beamed in a bottle from the closest retailer, just up the street! It was logical to crack open a cold one and chill out with Denise and discuss favourite craft beer styles and some of the great brewers we both look up to.

On May 22nd, 2016, I took my daughter to the taping of a CBC comedy production - *Still Standing* being filmed in Vulcan, Alberta. Garrett Wang beamed in and sat directly in front of us.

At the end of the taping, I offered a can of our Colla-beer-ation with Clock Tower Brewing 'The Final Frontier', which was featured at Ottawa Comic Con. I expect to get a beer review from Ensign Harry Kim at our next meeting.

What have the Federation of Beer got lined up for the future?

We plan to use technology to allow our fans to help influence our next project and provide feedback in real time. In 2014, we invited those attending the Nightclub and Bar show in Vegas to 'Choose your Anomaly' and this influenced the creation of Syndicate Lager, 'The Orion Seductress' which was released at *Destination Star Trek* 2014. Romulan Ale is a brew that we have attempted but there is no natural way to



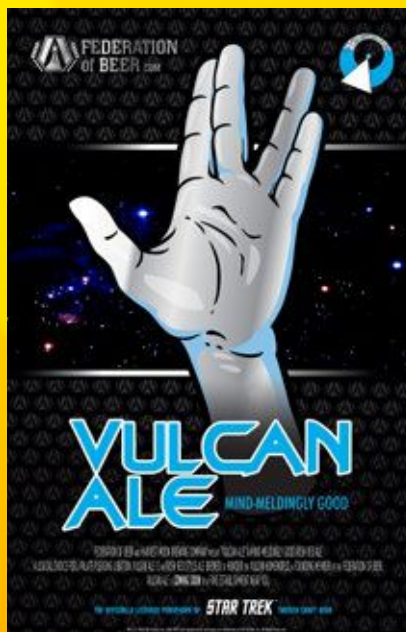
colour beer turquoise blue. The previous creator of Romulan Ale included so much blue colouring that there were reports of 'green pee' the morning after!

We plan to release a Winter Warmer-styled brew in time for Halloween and Christmas, 2016. We release three or four brews a year. Each brew is a unique episode. We do this to keep things interesting for the fans and ensure that each episode retains its value as a collectible.

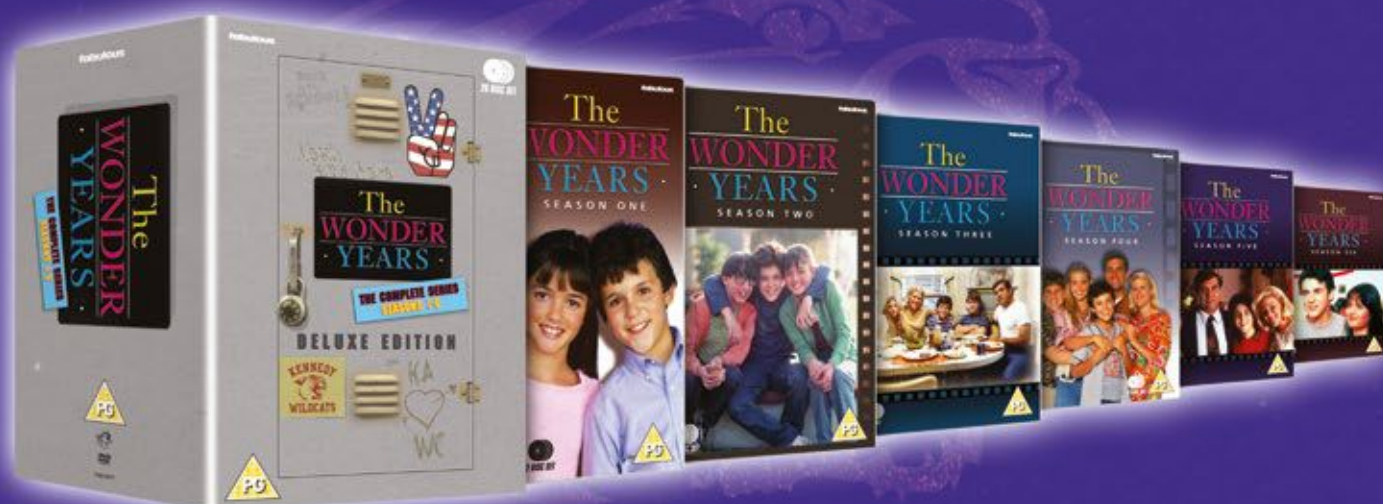
I am amused to note that on eBay and Amazon - our empty cans and bottles sell for as much as \$19 each. We are stoked to see our fans enjoy this project both philosophically as well as financially! Which beer KHAN you drink, then sell the empty for 5 times the initial investment?

MARTIN UNSWORTH

Discover more about FEDERATION OF BEER by catching them at *DESTINATION STAR TREK* in Birmingham on October 7th - 9th, and checking out the website federationofbeer.com.



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The Magnificent Seven in Space

by John Townsend

As we prepare for another cinematic version of the classic western, **STARBURST** takes a look back at the sci-fi retelling: **BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS...**

It is an accepted truth that *The Magnificent Seven* is one of the great westerns, a film memorable as much for its star-studded line-up and heroic story as it is for Elmer Bernstein's rousing theme music. There is an age-old quiz question: 'can you name all of the Seven?' To avoid reader frustration, the answer is at the end of this article, but there is a more interesting poser, a question more relevant to our cult sensibility here at STARBURST. Which one of the Seven appeared in a remake of the 1960 movie that was set in space? Fear not, the answer is also close at hand.

Following the release of *Star Wars* in 1977, the money-orientated Hollywood executives, as money-orientated Hollywood executives are wont to do, set about trying to emulate the astonishing success of George Lucas' film, with varying degrees of failure. *Spacehunter: Adventures In The Forbidden Zone* (1983)

ripped off *Star Wars* wholesale, from the cool, swaggering space pirate to the cyborg bad-guy that was more than just a little reminiscent of the Dark Lord of the Sith himself. Fun certainly, but hardly memorable. Taking its inspiration more from the fantastical, mythical side of Lucas' creation was *Krull* (1983), a yarn of derring-do and romantic valour lifted straight from the *Star Wars* playbook. An enjoyable mess, with moments of high camp, *Krull* is ultimately let down by some ropey effects and the distracting, precisely trimmed beard of its lead.

As the list grew and grew, famed indie producer Roger Corman decided in 1980 to get in on the act, but instead of simply trying to regurgitate the formula that made *Star Wars* such a hit, and so many others such a flop, he chose a different inspiration - *The Magnificent Seven* - and that film's inspiration, Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. The result was *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

Firstly, a little background. This new film was to be the biggest budget, and certainly most ambitious, production of Corman's career. In order to balance the books, and with the majority of the money reportedly spent on one or two cast members (more of that later),





Corman continued with his preference for employing young, hungry filmmakers, often giving them their first break. Having previously mentored some of cinema's greatest talents, including Nicolas Roeg (who was cinematographer on 1964's Edgar Allan Poe adaptation *The Masque of the Red Death*) and Francis Ford Coppola (who re-edited an obscure Russian film for Corman in 1962), the producer assembled a talented group for his space opera. Writer John Sayles would next work on the screenplay for Joe Dante's seminal horror *The Howling* (1981), and the late composer James Horner has *Aliens* (1986) and *Glory* (1989) on his illustrious C.V., but perhaps most notable is the man Corman employed to oversee the special effects. When the original art director was fired, Corman turned to someone working quietly in the producer's studio as a miniature model maker, and who at the time was employed on the film in camera rigging, James Cameron. His first break, Cameron became responsible for many of the iconic ships and sets seen in *Battle Beyond the Stars*. Cameron would also meet early collaborator and second wife, film producer Gale Anne Hurd (at the time an assistant to Corman) on set, and within just a few years would announce himself as a major Hollywood director with *The Terminator* (1984) and *Aliens* (1986).

But what about the film itself? Well, *Battle Beyond the Stars* is the epitome of sci-fi indulgence, a film so over-the-top even the cheese comes with an extra layer of contrivance. And yet this remains the film's greatest strength. There is an unashamed sense of energetic fun about the whole thing, it is a ride of unrelenting endearment that forces you to ignore any negative thoughts you might have and just go with Corman's vision. Where many of the other films that sprung from the *Star Wars* well of inspiration took themselves and their subject far too seriously, rendering them either unknowingly preposterous or wearily dull, *Battle Beyond the Stars* knows it's just a little bit silly, and that's absolutely fine.

Riffing on *The Magnificent Seven* with barely an ironic shrug of its heavily padded shoulders, the film follows farm boy Shad (Richard Thomas – yes, John-Boy from *The Waltons*) as he searches for mercenaries to help battle the evil overlord Sador (John Saxon, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*). In what becomes a series of set pieces loosely bound together with a narrative so thin as to be virtually unimportant, Shad assembles his rag-tag bunch of 'heroes', with each having their own tenuous reason for agreeing to the suicide mission against Sador. And what an eclectic group they are.

Darlanne Fluegel as Nanelia is first to sign up, quickly becoming Shad's wispy love interest as the poor woman has spent her life surrounded by androids on an isolated space station and has no knowledge of sex, but is more than a little keen to learn; what's a farm boy to do? That said, you could have excused our hero from having his head turned by Sybil Danning's voluptuous Valkyrie St. Exmin, who sports a range of attire so flesh-exposingly minimal that it would give Princess Leia's bikini a run for its money!

Most notable, though, are two actors who joined Corman's adventure, and added some much-needed credibility. With his film career winding down, and before embarking upon his most famous role heading *The A-Team* as John 'Hannibal' Smith, George Peppard appears as likeable stereotype Cowboy. Complete with a whisky-dispensing belt and a pendant for one-liners, Cowboy becomes Obi-Wan to Shad's Luke, similarly reaching iconic sentimental status in the final battle. More A-List than A-Team (although he did coincidentally appear in several episodes) is the other actor competing for star billing, Robert Vaughn. Still very much at his peak, Vaughn was a major coup for Corman, and the answer to that aforementioned question. Effectively reprising his role from





The Magnificent Seven, but now known as Gelt, Vaughn was reportedly the main drain on *Battle Beyond the Stars*' finances, but he brings an air of serious sophistication to a darkly camp role despite the film's more playful premise.

So should you take the time to discover, or revisit, *Battle Beyond the Stars*?

This is a type of film that, for the most part, has disappeared from cinema. In today's post-Nolan world, science fiction has been forced to take itself very seriously, just like all those *Star Wars* wannabes that populate the 1980s. Films set in space now need to establish some basis in fact, hard science if you will, insisting that even if the technology doesn't currently exist, then it possibly could. The current iteration of *Star Trek* promised to bring some of the fun back, and does so with varying success, while *Independence Day: Resurgence* is just a bit, well, meh. Of course, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* works, and works very well, but it was always going to. The blueprint was already there; it was just a matter of following it well enough to appease the fan boys who had spent years polishing their lightsabers. Think about it; in recent years, only *Guardians of the Galaxy* has managed to capture

that elusive sense of fun so infuriatingly missing from the genre. And that's why you absolutely should. *Battle Beyond the Stars* is a film you need in your life. Take some time out, grab the popcorn and a beer, and enjoy a piece of cinema that stands proudly for everything that filmmaking should be. This is a film of exuberance, enthusiastically made by a team pushing themselves to succeed amidst tight constraints. It isn't perfect, far from it. There are moments of head-shakingly awkward dialogue and try not to look too closely at the sets, but none of that really matters. *Battle Beyond the Stars* is a film so refreshingly simple, so irresistibly entertaining that it deserves your time.

Still not convinced? Still not sold on the idea of Sybil Danning's pseudo-sadomasochistic outfits or George Peppard's clichéd, witticism-coining Cowboy? Consider this, then: where else will you see a spaceship that resembles a fulsome female moose complete with oversized breasts? *Interstellar* doesn't have that. We'll leave it there.

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN ride into UK cinemas on September 23rd.



Did you get them all? Here you go: Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Horst Buchholz, Charles Bronson, Robert Vaughn, James Coburn, and Brad Dexter.

HORROR Obscura

This month, the gypsy Joel Harley takes a look at a riotous, splatter-filled, modern grindhouse film...

SPARE CHANGE?

BY JOEL HARLEY





The Big Issue, ladies and gentlemen, and an exercise in doing-what-it-says-on-the-tin, Jason Eisener's 2011 faux grindhouse exploitation film, *Hobo with a Shotgun*. Cult as it may be, with a title like that, there's no forgetting this one.

Of all the cheeky, winking faux-exploitation movies which followed Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez's *Grindhouse* double bill in 2007 (being Tarantino's *Death Proof* and Rodriguez's *Planet Terror*), among the most worthwhile and sturdy on its own merits is Eisener's *Hobo with a Shotgun*. It's second only to *Death Proof* in terms of quality, and certainly far better than anything with *Machete* in the title.

Professionally grizzled man Rutger Hauer is the titular Hobo, arriving via boxcar in the ironically named Hope Town (renamed 'Scum Town' by the residents), hoping to settle down, earn some cash and buy himself a lawnmower. Some things, however, just aren't meant to be. Unable to overlook the rampant crime and horror of Scum Town, after defending an out-of-her-depth hooker (Molly Dunsworth), the Hobo finds himself on the wrong side of local mob boss The Drake (Brian Downey) and his sons, Ivan and Slick (Gregory Smith and Nick Bateman). One brutal beating and branding later, and the Hobo trades in his lawnmower dreams for... you guessed it, a shotgun. And so the Hobo takes to the streets, delivering justice... one shell at a time.

So successful is *Hobo With a Shotgun* in its depiction of Technicolor '70s-era video nasty, that you'll meet many a person who'll swear it an authentic relic from that period (hi Dad!). Look no further than its canny casting of cult star Rutger Hauer, making the most of the actor's penchant for playing rough, transient types during his heyday (see *The Hitcher*, *Blind Fury*, and even *Blade Runner*). It's this casting which grounds *Hobo with a Shotgun* and makes it surprisingly relatable, Hauer playing the Hobo with staggering heart and emotion – in addition to the snarling vengeance and spat profanities one might expect. It's a film steeped in playful artifice and stylish flourishes, but by approaching the Hobo like a real person, this ensures that it feels like a real movie also... and not just an extended joke trailer, à la the disappointingly vapid *Machete*.

It too started life as a fake trailer, Eisener's short being the winner of a competition to promote *Grindhouse*, even without Hauer as its Hobo. As a grindhouse piece, the trailer is even more 'authentic' than the finished film, being *genuinely* cheap, grubby and badly acted. There's that semi-iconic black and yellow font, though, and the very recognisable bones of a story about a Hobo who just wants to buy a lawnmower and start his own business. Fun fact: original Hobo David Brunt also cameos in the finished product as a cop.

'I am tired' reads the Hobo's scrawled sign, and it's hard not to feel for the man, forced to suffer painful indignities as he's ridiculed and brutalised by the local cops, and made to take part in 'bum fights' to earn cash for the lawnmower he dreams of. Tragically, the precious mower is all but within his grasp when the city finally pushes him too far – witnessing an armed robbery at the pawn shop, the Hobo decides that enough is enough. Enter *Blind Fury*-mode Hauer. A moment, incidentally, which

is cribbed wholesale from Eisener's original faux-trailer, from the initial robbery to the bloody montage which follows.

Robbers, rapists and even a paedophile dressed as Santa Claus are all in the Hobo's sights, blasted away during an initial killing spree that recalls *Death Wish* by way of *Maniac Cop*. Inevitably, The Drake and his kid hoodlums don't take too kindly to this, coming at the Hobo with ice skates, a baseball bat covered in razor blades and – in the film's darkest, nastiest, yet most hilarious moment – a flamethrower, school bus full of children, and The Tramp's *Disco Inferno* playing on the boom box. Not a film for everyone, then. As sympathetic and human as Hauer is as the Hobo, the evil and hatred of Scum Town and its denizens are even worse.

Hobo with a Shotgun is a film that, like *The Drake*, delights in its gore and cruelties – a level of splatter rarely witnessed outside of Peter Jackson's *Braindead*. This is dialled up to such an extent that it is, thankfully, impossible to take too seriously; certainly not in scenes such as its opening murder, in which a man's head is pulled from his body with the assistance of a car, a manhole cover, and a rope, resulting in the sort of arterial spray that so often plagued Bruce Campbell in *Evil Dead 2*. All refreshingly 'real' and free of CGI, it's a less disjointed experience than *Machete*, more authentic than *Planet Terror*, and more action-packed than *Death Proof*, expertly managing the right balance between modern and retro. And, even better, no dodgy cameos from Eli Roth or Tarantino.

If anything, the acting is *too* good for the film *Hobo with a Shotgun* pretends to be, with Hauer delivering one of his best ever performances (alright, it's no 'Tears in Rain' monologue, but it's certainly up there with his *Hitcher*, and miles better than bloody *Van Helsing*) and Downey chewing the scenery as the malicious, quacking crime lord. Smith and Bateman are also enjoyable as his dim sons, whose deaths provide the film with its most satisfying moments.

From its opening credits (the music by Michael Holm lifted from the '70s Udo Kier horror film *Mark of the Devil*), onwards, the film is perfectly pitched, never letting up on its game. Everything from the music to the costumes and purposefully-aged cinematography is expertly designed – an all-too-believable world that hooks you in and doesn't let go right up until the brutal, bloody, and upsetting end.

Rutger Hauer shooting bastards will only take you so far though, and the film is forced to up the stakes with the introduction of its sci-fi-esque bounty hunter psychopaths The Plague – a pair of armour-clad demons (who may or may not have been responsible for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and, uh, Jesus) named Rip and Grinder. This gives way to a gory, if fairly silly, climax in which the Hobo's hooker friend loses her hand and (spoiler alert) stabs The Drake with what remains of the bone. Still less stupid than *Planet Terror* and its machine gun leg, though. Even this feels in keeping with the film's established anything-goes tone, a semi-natural escalation of events that wards off accusations of *Hobo with a Shotgun* ever feeling like a one-note movie trailer dragged out to feature-length.





HOBOWITH A SHOTGUN

It may be the ultraviolence and the splatter that sits highest on the film's agenda, but that's not to say that Eisener and writer John Davies don't have other things on their mind too. In our age of rampant destitution, poverty, and anti-homeless spikes, scenes in which the public are encouraged to go around murdering hobos feel depressingly apt. Thankfully, Rutger Hauer is more than capable of looking after himself, even if his fellow bums do take a lot of the flack for his actions. This social commentary is fleeting – it's more interested in fountains of blood – but certainly relevant.

And, of course, that writing also gets us one of the finest jokes of this decade: the newspaper headline 'Hobo stops begging. Demands change.' gets a laugh every time, and the script remains thoroughly quotable, whether it's Drake philosophising on life to his sons ("when life gives you razor blades... you make a baseball bat covered in razor blades") or the Hobo threatening goons ("I'm gonna sleep in your bloody carcass tonight") and standing up for the modesty of poor Mother Teresa ("A goddamn saint!").

Since *Hobo with a Shotgun*, director Eisener has returned to keeping it short, with *Y is for Youngbuck* in the hit and miss *The ABCs of Death* (the sequel is much better) and the amusing *Slumber Party Alien Abduction in V/H/S 2* (the much better sequel). His 2011 feature being one of the best exploitation thrillers in recent years, let's hope he returns to the fray sooner rather than later. Those craving their Hobo/Shotgun fix can also seek out the tie-in *Hobo with a Shotgun* comic book and side-scrolling shoot 'em up smartphone game (also available to play online, and far too difficult), or simply look to their local town centre, for a veritable army of the destitute.

The pretend grindhouse, meanwhile, shows no sign of stopping. It's been a while since Tarantino and Rodriguez released their vision upon the world, but the retro-em-up subgenre continues, with *Machete Kills* in 2013 (better than the first... barely) and its sequel *Machete Kills in Space* reportedly still in the works. David Sandberg's 2015 short *Kung Fury* pits a '80s kung fu cop against Hitler, while a spiritual follow-up (of sorts) to *Hobo with a Shotgun* can also be found in the charming, almost-as-gory *Turbo Kid*.

Hobo with a Shotgun remains an obscure one, to be sure, but it has recently found a home on online streaming services and will soon debut on Horror Channel in the UK, ensuring that its cult keeps on growing.

He just wanted to buy a lawnmower.



Horror Channel screen HOBOWITH A SHOTGUN on September 9th.

Sky 319 / Virgin 149 / Freeview 70 / Freesat 138.



by Martin Unsworth

Mark Morris

Bloodsuckers have always been a major trope in horror movies, rarely out of fashion and often reinvented. *VAMPIRE RESURRECTION*, the début film from MARK MORRIS, mixes traditional horror with the flavour of *BUFFY*. We set about finding out more...

STARBURST: What made you get into filmmaking?

Mark Morris: One Christmas, my Mum bought me a Cine Camera and Super 8 projector. I was 14 with a huge imagination. Filmmaking really became viable with NLEs [non-linear editing systems] on computers. Suddenly you could edit and make films instantly. A far cry from splicing 8mm films together. All those things I had thought of in my imagination were now possible.

Your two previous shorts are also vampire-related - what attracted you to bloodsuckers?

Although I loved the '70s and Christopher Lee Dracula films, I grew out of them in my teens. So it was more for practical reasons. Horror is a good genre for indie filmmakers. I would stress horror is not my favourite genre, but the good thing about vampires is that there is a lot more substance to them than your average evildoers. Films like *Twilight* show they can be romantic or misunderstood, complicated, even good and, of course, their dark side has so many elements. But my practical side again, they also happen to be very popular at the box office and relatively easy to create for a low budget outing.

Before I made *Vampire Resurrection*, I made a short test film I hoped to use as a calling card and then I made a second short to help my planned feature evolve and gain some experience as well as creating an awareness and insight into the indie film community. I felt, though, that the two short films I made didn't really work as calling cards because it was difficult to write and structure similar to a feature film, as there was so little time to develop characters and get an audience invested. Hopefully, *Vampire Resurrection* will persuade investors and distributors on board for the next outing.

How long did *Vampire Resurrection* take to make?

I wrote the screenplay. The first draft version took about three weeks, helped by the fact I had already written a big Hollywood blockbuster version. Then at least thirty rewrites followed. So



Hollywood, if you're listening, I have one you can make too! All in all, it took me about five years of polishing and testing to get it where I could make it at such a low budget. I would also leave it for long periods then come back to it. Because I work at a school, the shoot itself was shot during school holidays. The Easter shoot was fifteen days and the summer shoot was forty-two days. Post-production was about three months.

How did you raise the budget?

My Mum and Nan left some money for me in their will and I know they would be very proud and pleased for it to be used this way. They did the catering for the two shorts and helped prepare for the feature. I miss them so much.

There's some great use of locations in the film, were they hard to come by?

Our brilliant cast and crew often had contacts and friends and it's amazing

how helpful people will be. Richard Unger, who operated the crane and did a million and one other things, helped secure our Baldock locations. Our friend Jason Vachon, who played one of the Vampire gang at Chislehurst Caves, let us shoot there. Another friend, Edward Morley, who played our priest, got us access to a farm and helicopter - of which he contributed half the cost.

The tone of the film - particularly in the score and earlier on - is often quite light, was that to appeal more to *Buffy* fans, and younger viewers in particular, rather than going for all-out blood and guts?

Well spotted, you... Yes, I wanted to appeal to all ages and not just the hard-core horror fans who might be disappointed to find it's not hard-gore. I wanted to tell a moral, satisfying story, something I build into all my scripts. Hopefully, future versions will have a bigger budget and I can add in more effects. But not a lot more, as I feel effects often take away rather than serve the story

in many films these days, and why not have some out-and-out humour in a horror film? *Beetlejuice*, *The Addams Family* did. Charles Dickens said: "Make them laugh. Make them cry".

Any particular stories from the shoot you'd like to tell?

Many things happened, and I can't tell some of the best ones without getting into trouble. Sorry! Okay, the ones I can tell. I remember one location there was a wasp's nest with the pests buzzing around and causing havoc. Steve had all our film equipment in his van, but magically, he also had the chemicals to kill wasps. Later on another location, we had yet another nest threatening cast and crew. This time Richard Unger bought over a Jerrican from the genny and blew the nest up. No messing there. That was typical of Richard. Always larger than life and bringing Rambo solutions to problems.

I remember we had a helicopter booked and on that morning we had thick fog, the only foggy day of the shoot, so we

VAMPIRE RESURRECTION







thought it would be grounded, but we went anyway, and luckily, it cleared. We tied the Blackmagic pocket camera to the outside of the helicopter to shoot interior dialogue as we were flying. All was going well until I looked out of the window and unbelievably the camera was gone and there was a river below us! Luckily, it had just dropped down. However, the footage was so shaky it was unusable. We shot from the outside of the now stationary helicopter and all you could hear were cows mooing through all the dialogue. Luckily, the farmer settled them down. They were excited because the farmer had put a bull in the nearby field.

What's next for you?

Very Exciting. We are screening at the STARBURST International Film Festival [August 26th - 28th in Manchester] and in talks with a well-known distribution company in Elstree, which is ongoing. We have one small distribution deal in the US and Japan. I have twelve scripts, three of those in development. My next film, I hope, is called *Project Evolver*. The world needs this, but we need investment. If any STARBURST readers want to help or know how we could raise the money, please contact me on [facebook.com/evilofthevampires](https://www.facebook.com/evilofthevampires). I will be looking for cast and crew, so come and join us.

VAMPIRE RESURRECTION screens on the Family Day of the STARBURST INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL. For more details head over to starburstfilmfest.co.uk. PROJECT EVOLVER has just completed a Kickstarter campaign.



REVIEW:

VAMPIRE RESURRECTION

**CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: MARK MORRIS
/ STARRING: MARK MORRIS, AMANDA LARA KAY, ALAN
HARDING, RACHEL POOLEY, PAUL VAN BEAUMONT /
RELEASE DATE: TBC**

There are always a couple of simple go-to subgenres for low budget filmmakers: zombies and vampires. Both are undead, both very commercial, and both fairly easy to film with little or no money. Making them work on a shoestring is incredibly difficult, but after several shorts, Mark Morris has plunged into feature work with a fairly decent effort.

Twenty-five years ago, a young girl helps her guardian (Beaumont) slay a vampire; just a normal child's upbringing, then? Now in her mid-thirties, Anne (Kay) has two teenagers - both awkward in their own way - and a no-nonsense husband, Jack (writer/director/cameraman Morris), who is determined his family should lead a normal life. Anne, however, has no problem telling her children (Harding and Pooley) all about her past and the evil that lurks out in the world. Unfortunately, one night, the kids decide to find the grave of the bloodsucker their mother killed. A tragedy enables the vengeful nocturnal predator to return, leaving Anne no option but to seek out the slayer who raised her, while disbelieving Jack is convinced it's all the work of a bunch of drug addicts.

While *Vampire Resurrection* may not be the most original of ideas, it certainly manages to bring some different slants to the weary format. The main focus of the action is the stubborn father, really. His attitude goes beyond scepticism to being practically blinkered, and this highlights one of the other aspects that the film brings to the table: humour. OK, we're not talking hearty belly laughs, but the approach and tone do mean the movie is particularly family-friendly. Like the TV series that so obviously influenced the tale, there is certainly lightness to the storytelling and the violence and gore are at an acceptable early-teens level. This is heightened by the often whimsical score, which also allows the father to be a figure of fun, definitely an aspect younger viewers would enjoy.

There is plenty to enjoy in the film, but it's not without its problems. It could do with the narrative tightening up, overstaying its welcome a little as we get through the one-hour-forty running time. An impartial editor could have easily sorted this out, but sometimes the projects at this level are too much of a personal achievement that one can understand it's hard to let go of certain aspects. Morris certainly manages to work wonders with what he has, though. Some really well composed and thought-out shots allow for some atmosphere - particularly during the night-time scenes.

Like most low budget films, some of the acting is lacking, but that's to be expected and it's not too distracting. Where *Vampire Resurrection* does succeed is in bringing a family moral to the proceedings. Not as schmalzy as *Buffy*, and probably a lot more relatable to a younger British audience as a result (well, apart from the undead rising with papier-mâché transformed faces). There's potential here, and it's certainly worth your time.



REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



SUICIDE SQUAD

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: DAVID AYER / SCREENPLAY: DAVID AYER / STARRING: MARGOT ROBBIE, WILL SMITH, JAI COURTNEY, VIOLA DAVIS, JOEL KINNAMAN, JARED LETO, CARA DELEVINGNE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

With *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* and *Man of Steel*, the DC Cinematic Universe has got off to a rough start. So *Suicide Squad*, with trailers painting a kind of neon-lit attitudinal take on the lesser-known comics originally by Robert Kanigher and Ross Andru, had a lot to do. Sadly, the hype nosedived, thanks to some of the worst reviews for a comic book film in recent memory, with comparisons made to toxic capers like *Catwoman* and Marvel's *Elektra*. So is *Suicide Squad* that bad?

The film sees ruthless government agent Amanda Waller (Viola Davis) try to get her Task Force X initiative approved, whereby she would assemble some of the world's deadliest villains and use them as problem solvers for the fights that the ordinary military are 'unequipped' (or too sane) to handle. Needless to say, one of those very problems soon arrives and this 'Suicide Squad' is sent in to ensure victory. Whatever the film's naysayers watched must have been different to what this writer witnessed because - at the risk of earning my colleagues' scorn - this unhinged film is unconcerned with professionalism and more with making a fascinating artistic statement reflecting the shift of cinema culture. Studio interference (and editing issues that come with it) is never something to be recommended (see the abysmal *Fantastic Four*) but here it strangely adds to the deranged edge of this genre meat grinder.

Ayer's \$175 million B-movie blended flick reverts the flash of the genre to a visual mosh pit with a *Guardians of the Galaxy*-esque use of the perfectly eclectic soundtrack and retro score by Steven Price. The film feels like flicking through a comic, with the opening quarter consisting of a barrage of backstories and character splash-outs. The narrative itself is relatively simple then seems to take a turn into more formulaic territory but, unlike the usual third act syndrome, is rescued from that fate by the consistent characterisation, charisma and a finale intercut with flashbacks that denote an intriguing idea of supervillain ambitions.

Will Smith hasn't been this appealing in years, lending swagger as Deadshot, while Margot Robbie is literally perfect as Harley Quinn, channelling an unpredictable madcap malice in this flawed but no less wowing joyride through comic lore. So good is Robbie that you crave a sole outing for her Harley and her interactions with Jared Leto's drip-fed appearances as the Joker are a throwback to *Batman: The Animated Series*, especially in one chase flashback that had this writer grinning like Mr. J himself. Leto's portrayal is divisive but his arachnid-mannered madman blends Hamill and Ledger's previous incarnations with Ziggy Stardust and Marilyn Manson. Viola Davis is a scene stealer as arguably the film's real villain Waller, with Jai Courtney's Captain Boomerang,

Jay Hernandez's New 52-influenced El Diablo, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje's Killer Croc, Karen Fukuhara's Katana, and Joel Kinnaman's Rick Flag - and his striking romantic connection to Cara Delevingne's Enchantress-afflicted Dr June Moore - all offering fun support.

Not swallowed up by worldbuilding, littered with '80s action film motifs (*Escape From New York* influences and macho actioner dialogue) and with many messages about the corruption of the establishment, the nature of wish fulfilment, rightist politics and a comment on the deranged nature of the Joker and Harley (which critics have branded sexist and sick but, let's face it, the Joker's abuse should never be anything but sick, likewise this twisted Stockholm Syndrome-like relationship), this antithesis of the comic book caper, is a cult film if ever there was one, or should that be cult of personality? David Ayer, under stress and pressure and at the behest of a modern audience wanting something different, seems to have helmed a new age punk rock movie, and like that particular music movement, one wonders if *Suicide Squad* will be re-evaluated in a few years or even inspire a particular pop cultural kick of its own.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 5

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★★★ 9

STARBURST



PETE'S DRAGON

CERT: PG / **DIRECTOR:** DAVID LOWERY / **SCREENPLAY:** DAVID LOWERY, TOBY HALBROOKS / **STARRING:** OAKES FEGLEY, OONA LAURENCE, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, KARL URBAN, ROBERT REDFORD, WES BENTLEY, JOHN KASSIR / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

"Deep in the forest, there dragons will be!" And according to this film, those dragons will be furry and behave very much like a dog. Fans of Disney's original Pete's Dragon may not be overly happy with this furry CGI upgrade, but everyone else should rejoice. Disney's hi-tech reboot roars and soars in all the right places, and best of all, it's not even a musical anymore!

While the original's song *Candle on the Water* was Oscar-nominated back in 1977, this new version ditches the songs, most of the story, and even the cartoon dragon himself. Instead we get little Pete (Oakes Fegley) orphaned in a car crash in the first five minutes and meeting his furry dragon protector Elliot deep in the forest moments after. Cut to six years later and Pete and his puppy-like best friend spend all their time alone, unwashed and unbothered in the woods, living like wild animals until they are discovered simultaneously by forest ranger Grace Meacham (Bryce Dallas Howard) and the men whose job it is to turn all the trees to timber.

Shot in stunning New Zealand and with an overt, but not overdone, eco-message, Pete's Dragon feels like a hugely worthwhile update of the original. Not only is Elliot now created from decent, if not mind-blowing CGI, but the struggle between 'progress' and the wilderness feels timely, especially when backed up by a healthy criticism of the mentality of trophy hunting.

Pete's Dragon is stuffed full of heart, wild emotion and an overflowing love of nature. From Robert Redford's teller of (what people assume to be tall) tales, to Bryce Dallas Howard's ranger, to Pete and

Elliot's joyful playing in their forest home, the film is packed on one side by those with an affinity with the great outdoors. On the other side, you have Karl Urban and his gang of timber men whose disregard for nature their fear of the unknown causes Pete and his dragon plenty of problems as the predictable story plays out.

This all makes it sound like a message movie, which Pete's Dragon certainly isn't. It's a simple adventure of a boy and his dog/dragon with shades of both this year's *The Jungle Book* and, more surprisingly, Room's Jacob Tremblay helps, but it's also in the scenes where Pete is forced from his forest home and into a civilisation he knows very little about, wanting nothing more than to

return to the home he loves with the only companion he trusts.

Fegley is fantastic in the role and his relationships with both the adorable Elliot and mother figure Grace are the heart of the film. Along with Howard Shore's suitably emotive score, Pete's Dragon hits all the right notes to tug at the heartstrings. There's nothing particularly original about it, but if the likes of *E.T.* or *Marley and Me* get to you, Pete's Dragon is likely to have as many kids comforting their weepy parents as vice versa.

PETE TURNER

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 6

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 8



STARBURST



STAR TREK BEYOND

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: JUSTIN LIN / SCREENPLAY: SIMON PEGG, DOUG JUNG / STARRING: CHRIS PINE, ZACHARY QUINTO, JOHN CHO, SIMON PEGG, ZOE SALDANA, IDRIS ELBA, SOFIA BOUTELLA, KARL URBAN, ANTON YELCHIN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

"Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise, its five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilisations and to boldly go where no man has gone before." This opening monologue has echoed through the living rooms of multiple generations of sci-fi fans, as Gene Roddenberry's staple in not only the genre but in popular culture has gone from entertainment to a way of life for many. Star Trek has dissected many pioneering ideas across its 50 years of existence and with this new film, in the ever-changing, rebooting and alternating cinematic series of features, Fast & Furious director Justin Lin aims to celebrate the series, while also continuing its traditions.

At a time where nostalgia and going back to the past seems to be all the rage, perhaps as a way of escaping the turbulent hateful times in which we now live, this latest entry in the Trek cinematic canon likewise follows (space) suit. Beyond sees the crew three years into their five-year voyage, making a brief return to the starbase called Yorktown. Kirk (Pine) and Spock (Quinto) are each privately contemplating leaving Starfleet, but when a distressed alien pilot speaks of her crew being stranded on a planet, the Enterprise is encouraged to go on a rescue mission. However, they are ambushed and decimated by the forces of Krall (Elba), in an attempt to get an artefact from the Enterprise's storage. This attack leaves the crew separated in the ship's wreckage on the planet's surface and desperate to reunite and uncover why Krall wants this artefact and what he can do with it.

Taking heavy influence from The

Original Series, this new film in the rebooted era of Star Trek is the ideal way to celebrate the 50th year of this franchise. Stripping things back to a very simplistic approach, Lin's film feels like a multi-stranded story of the series, with updated visuals. True, it offers nothing new in a narrative sense, but Simon Pegg and Doug Jung's screenplay offers many moments of hilarity, as well as a brilliant development of the characters as we have come to know them and thus some of their classic interplay begins to grow. Beyond in many ways feels like throwback Trek, drawing some influences from the recent pop culture vibes of Guardians of the Galaxy, complete with a climatic sequence that makes use of a recognisable song in a scene that's Guardians by way of Mars Attacks.

For those looking for a brave new direction though, this entry is really more at ease with going back and just having fun with what has made the franchise work, as opposed to advancing anything massively and in turn is a film by and for longtime fans. This may mean that the appeal of Beyond is dependent on what you consider your Star Trek but this is an enjoyable, well-paced adventure that is constantly entertaining. The plot boldly goes where the series has before – albeit very well – but there are progressive elements in the film's construction. Supporting characters are allowed to take more screen time, especially Chekov (the late Anton Yelchin - respectfully paid tribute to at the end of the film, alongside the legendary Leonard Nimoy) and Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott (Pegg) take much bigger roles this time. Saldana's Uhura is allowed to kick ass as a strong female character (one of a few

in the film) and John Cho's Sulu is revealed as gay (as a way of respecting franchise star George Takei - who has actually disapproved of the move), in a completely unshowily accepted way, just as it should be. These very developments are leaps and bounds ahead of other, more major, plot developments in the film.

Quinto and Pine's chemistry as Spock and Kirk is also maturing, while Urban finally gets more time to steal scenes as McCoy, whose run-ins with Spock come into play a lot here! Also great is the addition of Sofia Boutella's alien character Jaylah, who is a fantastic creation and a really exciting addition to the leading cast of characters. Really, the film's major misstep is with villain Krall, whose vengeful backstory feels a bit like a rehash of Eric Bana's Captain Nero in the 2009 film; while Elba spouts menace, his villain – much like Oscar Isaac's Apocalypse in this year's X-Men: Apocalypse – feels a bit uninteresting.

Still, this is not severe enough to derail the film's chirpy momentum and despite some really dodgily edited moments of action, where you sometimes lose track of who is hitting and attacking who, this is a consistently busy and engaging slice of sci-fi action. Overall, Beyond is a lot of fun and ought to please many old-school Trek fans with its nostalgic narrative and colourful characters and performances. After 50 years, Star Trek continues to live long and prosper.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 7

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 8



THE BFG

CERT: PG / **DIRECTOR:** STEVEN SPIELBERG / **SCREENPLAY:** MELISSA MATHISON / **STARRING:** MARK RYLANCE, RUBY BARNHILL, PENELOPE WILTON, JEMAIN CLEMENT, RAFFAELLE SPALL, REBECCA HALL / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

In adapting the works of Roald Dahl, a filmmaker has a wealth of material to work with. A legendary author whose stories mix British eccentricities with a fairy-tale heart and some truly twisted turns. Perhaps this is why many of the films adapted from Dahl's work have carried a certain kind of enchantment with them, from Mel Stuart's *Willy Wonka* and the *Chocolate Factory* and Danny DeVito's *Matilda* to Henry Selick's *James and the Giant Peach* and Wes Anderson's *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Dahl's work has certainly translated well to the big screen many times - even if the author disowned Stuart's *Wonka* film - but in many senses the biggest story of all is his 1982 story *The BFG*. Already adapted once in animated form in 1989 (a version that Dahl heartily approved of), this new live-action film from classic cinematic storyteller Steven Spielberg is arguably the biggest scaled attempt at adapting a Dahl story yet.

The *BFG* sees young orphan Sophie (Ruby Barnhill) witness a giant (Mark Rylance) roaming the streets of London. Being seen by a human encourages him to scoop this little witness up and take her back with him to his home in Giant Country. As she and this big, friendly giant begin to bond, Sophie discovers that the *BFG* is bullied by other giants and so throws himself into his work, capturing and making dreams. Worse still, the giants catch Sophie's scent, putting her in danger, but Sophie relies on her bravery not only to keep herself safe but also to try and save the *BFG* from his life of fear. In bringing this towering literary tale to the big screen, Steven Spielberg has used contemporary innovations to tell an old school story and while the result is not always seamless, it is regularly enchanting.

The late, great Melissa Mathison's (E.T.) screenplay struggles with some action elements but soars when it comes to heart. The *BFG* features a dazzling array of visual powers but for all its grandness, it is the quieter moments of storytelling and the emotive connection between its two leads that elevates the film above any lacking elements. The story starts off in truly excellent fashion, feeling immediately of another age, using a transportative power that comes with both Dahl's story and Spielberg's approach to family movies. In fact, the film is as much a throwback to Spielberg's memorable days of enthralling family flicks as it is an adaptation of the source material, which may annoy purists expecting a faithful incarnation of Dahl's book. A few things are altered, which is especially evident come the finale.

That being said, The *BFG* has an unshakeable charm thanks to its magnificent leads. Barnhill at points seems like she could annoy, but almost as soon as the thought enters your head, she retains the innocence and yet unexpected strength of her character. However, in a fantastically realised motion-capture performance, it is the magnificent Rylance who cradles your heart. As the *BFG*, he forms an immediate chemistry with Barnhill and his readings of the lines of Dahlian vocabulary are simply squiffing and at times poignant. He is the film's brimming core and makes this whole adventure the smile-inducing watch that it ends up being. Sadly, the supporting cast, while good, cannot hope to match the power of the leads, and the villains, the *BFG*'s long-windedly titled giant tormentors, are pretty forgettable (though the anti-bullying sentiment is much welcome).

From fart jokes to some prolonged set pieces, this film does have some excess, but it's carried forward by a youthful energy from Spielberg's direction and John Williams' equally playful scoring. Some gags miss the mark but there are laughs throughout when the dialogue delves into Dahl's world; when the film uses its delightfully dreamlike touch, it becomes an absolute joy, with many sequences (the initial meeting over a snozzcumber soup and a funnier-than-expected palace dining scene) really standing out. Also, fans of the book will notice a kind hearted little nod to illustrator Quentin Blake, during one of the film's darker moments.

Many say Spielberg has lost his touch of late, perhaps down to this film's box office bombing status in the States, but Dahl's work has often struggled to translate successfully - financially that is - to the big screen, especially to an American audience. Plus, with Spielberg's recent works like last year's acclaimed *Bridge of Spies* and his underrated 2011 release year, which saw both his version of Hergé series *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* and Michael Murpurgio adaptation *War Horse* released (two films this writer very much encourages people to revisit), it is hard to argue that this giant of movies has lost his touch. The *BFG* may not be faultless but Rylance's charm and the narrative's heart ensure this piece of old-fashioned cinematic adventuring is still a hopscotch piece of family entertainment.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 9

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 8



GHOSTBUSTERS

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: PAUL FEIG / SCREENPLAY: KATIE DIPPOLD, PAUL FEIG / STARRING: MELISSA MCCARTHY, KRISTEN WIG, KATE MCKINNON, LESLIE JONES, CHRIS HEMSWORTH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

How do we begin to introduce a review of Ghostbusters? By now, unless you have been living in an Ecto Containment Unit, you'll know two things: 1.) A proper third film in the Ghostbusters franchise has been in development hell for years and 2.) This new reboot of the franchise is the most controversial blockbuster bar none this year. Since the very polarising Ghostbusters 2 and the many rumours and stories thereafter, we had got to the point where it was all but certain a new Ghostbusters film would never materialise, even more so after the saddening news of the passing of star/writer Harold Ramis in 2014. However, with director Paul Feig (Bridesmaids, The Heat, Spy) at the helm, the proton-packed, paranormal problem solvers are back... well we say back. This all-new, all-female ensemble looks to start anew, a move that has angered many, left some intrigued and caused quite a stir online. Still amidst all the scorn, unsure trailers and debates about sexism, the most important thing is - is the film any good?

This movie sees Columbia University Professor Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig) scared that she may lose her position when a paranormal investigation book she co-authored appears online. To solve this, she visits her co-author and former friend, Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy), who is continuing her paranormal research, alongside the slightly unhinged genius Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon). Gilbert soon gets drawn back into this world and when these scientists investigate a subway apparition, worker Patty Tolan (Leslie Jones) likewise gets enamoured with the

art of ghost bustin'. Thus, the group is formed, as they try to tackle the rising paranormal activity in New York. For all the hate and aggression, it is rather ironic that the biggest issue with this new reboot is its continued attempts at pleasing those who have got so riled.

Ghostbusters is neither the train wreck that first trailer insinuated, nor the fantastic reinvention you hoped it could be, rather it is all just very 'meh'. The film is littered with multiple moments of promise - a potentially affecting backstory to Erin and Abby's friendship, a comic chemistry among the leads, an ideology about the nastiness of people breeding hate - but cannot develop its own rhythm thanks to being constantly dragged into a forced fan service. Dippold and Feig's script feels shackled by some kind of commitment to the franchise and thus any moments of its own feel at odds with the elements of the plot that seem content to rehash aspects of the original movie. The cameos, for instance, take nudge-wink referencing too far and feel forced as opposed to gleeful - with only the mid-end credits appearance by a big star really clicking.

All those haters who engulfed sites with their sickening prejudices have paradoxically been lambasting the very aspect that ensures this reboot is not a total bust - the cast! The four leading ladies really excel, with a natural chemistry that makes you wonder why the hell they didn't just create a brand new film series for these gals to kick ass in. Wiig is fantastic and her relationship with McCarthy feels really genuine and well placed alongside Jones' charm and

McKinnon's oddball. Then there is Chris Hemsworth, who steals scenes aplenty as hapless secretary Kevin. True, the ladies are separated into the mold of the original characters - again, why not just let them be free - but they make the most of it, despite some hit and miss dialogue, the hits largely coming from clearly improvised moments. Although the film lacks a strong villain and the many other faces in the film seem to just bob in and out of the proceedings, this leading quartet really boosts the energy of the overall picture.

Sadly, by revisiting old ground, Feig's film struggles to really formulate its own identity and thus a game director and the excellent cast feel a little bit like they have been let down by a studio (or whomever) wanting to prolong a franchise. That said, there are some effective sequences like a Times Square set piece and a very enjoyable opening, plus the colourful aesthetic recalls a Scooby-Doo like fun ghost train vibe. Then there are some effective moments of scoring by Theodore Shapiro. We just wish the movie had the determination to go all the way with its fresher convictions, because by going the reboot route but then simply making do with rehashing the glory days, this film has not let the cast do their thing. As a result, this bout of bustin' neither makes us feel bad or good, just kind of so-so.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 7

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 5

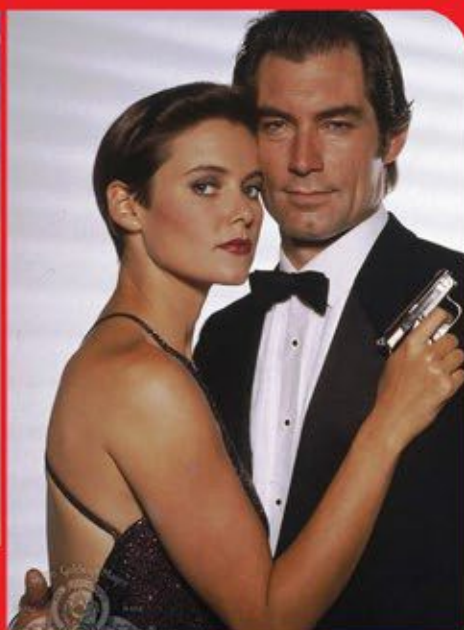
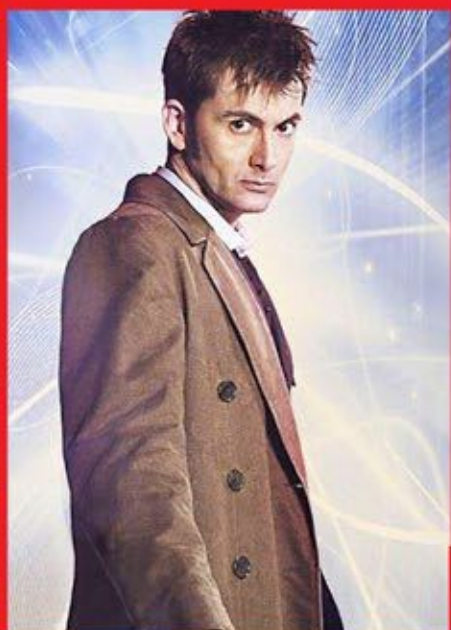


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BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SAM LIU / SCREENPLAY: BRIAN AZZARELLO / STARRING: KEVIN CONROY, MARK HAMILL, TARA STRONG, RAY WISE, JOHN DIMAGGIO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ever since its début in 1988, *Batman: The Killing Joke*, by writer Alan Moore and artist Brian Bolland, has been regarded as one of the greatest Batman stories of all time, standing alongside Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* as one of the most seminal graphic novels ever created. It's also been classed as the definitive Joker story, exploring the madness behind the carnival and showing the closest thing to an origin story the character ever had. It has influenced *Batman* in popular media ever since, with the *Arkham* games heavily referencing the story on multiple occasions and filmmakers Tim Burton and Christopher Nolan borrowing heavily from the plot's basic story, adopting Moore's approach to *Batman* and Joker's complicated relationship. DC and Warner Bros. Animation has had a solid track record with adapting famous stories for their movies, with standouts including *Superman vs. The Elite* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, but this has been the one that everyone has been waiting to see them adapt for the screen.

Despite being a hugely popular story, to this day it is still shocking and disturbing,

not just for its graphic content, but also by being the most chilling and believable analysis of a criminally warped mind that has ever been encountered. This story needed to have been done justice, and what we have in the last 45 minutes is a very faithful adaptation. By the time the newly added 28-minute prologue is finished and *The Killing Joke* properly starts, what follows is simply astounding. It is brilliantly directed by Sam Liu and wonderfully written by Brian Azzarello (*100 Bullets* and *DKIII: The Master Race*), capturing the dark and bleak atmosphere of the source novel thanks to its animation design and plot structure. The animation has a well-defined style about it, capturing the creepy griminess of Bolland's art style, as well as being very reminiscent of the famous art style of *Batman: The Animated Series*. As for the core main storyline, it is nearly word for word, beat for beat, accurate to the source, and that means its core message of how one normal man can turn insane after suffering just 'one bad day' is never lost, even when the horrible events transpire.

Despite the tremendous animation

and storytelling, bringing this famous tale to life wouldn't be complete without the phenomenal voice cast we have here. Mark Hamill has always loved *The Killing Joke* and for years has wanted to do a movie, and he delivers not just his A-game but also quite possibly his best performance to date. This is the most twisted Joker he's delivered yet, and during the fatal flashback sequences, he brilliantly nails the pathos and tragedy of the man who would be fated to become the Clown Prince of Crime. It all just goes to show why Hamill is the greatest Joker we've ever seen on screen, and the same can be said of Kevin Conroy, who is still *THE Batman*. Tara Strong and Ray Wise also bring real depth and gravitas to their respective roles of Barbara and Commissioner Gordon.

However, the one thing that comes close to spoiling this classic tale is the horribly tacked-on first 28 minutes, which feel as if you are watching a completely different movie to the one you've been waiting for. Granted, the whole idea of the 28-minute prologue was to flesh out Barbara Gordon's character and to show what her life was like as *Batgirl* before the tragic events of *The Killing Joke*. However, it does the complete opposite; it diminishes her character dramatically, turning her into the personification of *Women in Refrigerators* syndrome and makes her even more of a plot device than she admittedly was in the original story. She's basically the object of affection for *Batman* (as well as a mobster that has a creepy fetishistic obsession for her) and vice versa, which butchers the characterisation for both characters, almost ruins your perception of the main story's events, and culminates in the most disgusting thing imaginable: both of them doing the nasty, which is even more disturbing considering the fact that *Batman* is supposed to be a mentor/father figure to her! Why?!

When you get to see this movie, it is best advised to avoid the first 28 minutes like the plague and go straight into *The Killing Joke*, because from then on it is glorious. The animation is beautiful, the storytelling (apart from the prologue) is sharp, and the voice acting is outstanding (especially Hamill). It does Alan Moore and Brian Bolland's comic justice, honours its legacy, and further demonstrates why both the story and its main villain have stayed iconic to this day.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



DAEMOS RISING

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR AND SCREENPLAY: KEITH BARNFATHER / STARRING: BEVERLY CRESSMAN, MILES RICHARDSON, ANDREW WISHER, AMANDA EVANS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Billed as a sequel (of sorts) to the Doctor Who story *The Dæmons*, this is actually a 2004 video made by Reeltime Productions and is far more a follow-on to events in another of their releases, *Downtime*. It is linked back into the world

of Doctor Who, but this is more obstacle than blessing.

The central figure is Kate Lethbridge-Stewart (Cressman), daughter of the Brigadier, and visiting ex-UNIT operative Douglas Cavendish (Richardson). The backstory

is, Cavendish was broken by events in *Downtime* (not needed to make sense of this), then steals an artefact from the UNIT vaults and acts as a catalyst for events beyond his control. As Kate tries to help the alcoholic and desperate Cavendish, a ghostly figure (Wisher) appears and offers his help. Writer David J. Howe's story is bogged down by continuity and takes a long time to get up to full speed. The later part is entertaining enough, but the first half suffers from lack of pace and far too much exposition.

As a film, it leaves a lot to be desired. The slow-paced beginning is exacerbated by over-long camera shots of Kate walking around, and trying to avoid going in circles. She meets Cavendish and fails to express any emotion beyond that of slightly distasteful suffering. This is a shame as Cressman can clearly do more, as is seen by some of her darker

moments later in the story. Richardson and Wisher are also very one-dimensional, a flaw that extends over much of this tale. Director Keith Barnfather has to take the blame for this, despite his good intentions.

There are positives. Given its budget, it is shot well enough, makes some use of lighting and has decent special effects. When the Dæmon arrives, it is a convincing 3D render, voiced by Alistair Lock, who also did the sound and music. This release also includes a 16:9 cut, and plenty of behind the scenes features.

If you are a fan of *Downtime*, this is a release you may wish to add to your collection. As a nostalgic look at how Doctor Who could have evolved before its return, it is interesting enough. For others, it might be one to skip.

TONY JONES

★★★★★ 6



THE WAVE

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ROAR UTHAUG / SCREENPLAY: JOHN KÅRE RAAKE, HARALD ROSENLOW-EEG / STARRING: KRISTOFFER JONER, ANE DAHL TORP / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Just because Hollywood sucks in all that is good from around the globe, making pointless English language remakes of subtitled films and utilising stars from the best in world cinema, doesn't mean the world can't steal something back. With *The Wave*, Norway have ripped off the Hollywood blockbuster disaster movie, with all its heightened emotions, stock characters and CGI destruction intact.

Set in the stunning mountain pass of Åkneset, located in the Geiranger fjord in Norway, a geologist and his family are preparing to pack their things

and leave for the big city where father Kristian (Kristoffer Joner) has secured a new job. His wife Idun (Ane Dahl Torp) works in the local hotel, which is always full of tourists who flood the tiny community in order to take sightseeing trips through the magnificent landscape. While Idun and the two children are focused on the move, Kristian cannot let his job go, and becomes quickly convinced that a disaster is about to hit Åkneset.

As the opening titles show, there are 300 unstable mountainsides in the region and seven million cubic metres of rock that could at

any time fall into the water below. That amount of water being displaced so quickly could cause an 80-meter-high tsunami and drown everyone in its path. Take a guess what happens next.

Even though *The Wave* sounds like it should sit comfortably in la-la-land alongside such recent Hollywood efforts as *San Andreas* and *Into the Storm*, it comes across as surprisingly far more real. The characters might be a bland generic family unit that get separated at a pivotal point in the movie, but the setting and real-world context offered at the beginning of the movie make *The Wave* far more believable. At no point does Kristian shout down the phone to his son "I will come for you" like Dennis Quaid in *The Day After Tomorrow* and he's a far more convincing father figure than *The Rock* ever could be. Sorry Dwayne.

When the tsunami finally hits after a wonderfully suspenseful build up, *The Wave* unleashes some pretty impressive CGI considering the less-than-Hollywood budget and then keeps the action intense by fine-tuning the scope of the film to a very personal rescue mission. There's a series of visceral set-pieces and the whole

production looks like it costs a fortune. The characters are too conventional to fully saturate your emotions but as the film drips with tension, it will keep you gripped throughout.

The cast and director Roar Uthaug all handle the material brilliantly, so it's a shame that the script is quite so slavish to generic formula. However, there is an excellent swerve in the dark to watch out for late in the game as mother Idun must go to extreme places to save her son. See *The Wave* before Hollywood gets its hands on it and remakes the film with some obnoxious American tourists as the heroes.

PETER TURNER

★★★★★ 8





ATTACK ON TITAN

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SHINJI HIGUCHI / SCREENPLAY: YŪSUKE WATANABE, TOMOHIRO MACHIYAMA / STARRING: HARUMA MIURA, KIKO MIZUHARA, KANATA HONGŌ, HIROKI HASEGAWA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sometime in the future, and 100 years after the Titans attacked and nearly wiped out humanity, the remaining fragments of the human population are protected from them by huge walls.

Life goes on in the shadow of the Titans, and Eren (Haruma Miura) is a free-spirited soul who wants adventure rather than a regular job. Outside Monzen, a busy little town, he meets up with his friend Armin (Kanata Hongō), who has aspirations to be an inventor, and his love

interest Mikasa (Kiko Mizuhara). Eren, standing on the rusting hulk of what he calls a 'bomb' that is a leftover from the war, persuades his friends to come with him to see what lies beyond the inner wall.

Just as they are captured by an army unit guarding the wall, a colossal Titan sticks its head above the wall and starts smashing it down, allowing smaller Titans to escape. The army unit is told to remember their drills

and not panic. Breaking the tension, one soldier stupidly declares that they haven't got permission to use gunpowder! Preferring to fight back rather than stick to the rules, they fire their ancient cannons at the huge, lumbering Titans. The cannons are as useless as the need for a gunpowder permit; the Titans have the ability to regenerate unless the nape of their neck is slashed.

The lucky soldiers quickly retreat, whilst the unlucky ones are grabbed and snacked upon by the hungry Titans. Reaching the village of Monzen, the Titans greedily feast upon the helpless population.

This sets the action up for two years later, when the population is forced by starvation to fight back against their gigantic foes. The plan is to fill in the hole in the wall with their remaining explosives, but things soon go astray... In the process, Armin and Eren are reunited and we get to know what happened to Mikasa, who looked as if she faced certain

death in Monzen.

This 2015 film is loosely based on the manga comic and TV series, but it does stand up on its own right. As such it is an epic story filled with visions of the giant, naked, sexless, ugly, deformed Titan humanoids who could easily have escaped from a painting by Hieronymus Bosch.

There is a combination of CGI that is very impressive along with creaky special effects that make the Titans look like they've been clumsily overlaid into the action, which adds to their unreal nightmare-like quality.

The whole thing is an absurd, bloody, action-packed adventure yarn that has a sprinkling of humour, mixed with some strangely emotive and gory scenes, like the attack on a little church where hundreds of people are trapped and feasted upon. If you like the sight of blood, this is for you.

NIGEL WATSON

★★★★★★★★★ 7



POOR COW (1967)

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: KEN LOACH / SCREENPLAY: KEN LOACH, NELL DUNN / STARRING: CAROL WHITE, TERENCE STAMP, JOHN BINDON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Produced at the height of the Swinging Sixties, Ken Loach's first movie is a decidedly un-swinging affair, and all the better for it (give or take the odd beehive). Sticking to the course he set with his seminal BBC play *Cathy Come Home*, *Poor Cow* is an ultra-naturalistic, semi-improvised kick in the nutsack to orthodox drama.

Carol White, an actress whose personal descent into drink and drugs and early check-out at the age of 48 lends her strong performance here an added poignancy, is Joy, a young woman of limited intelligence but laudable optimism in the face of some

frankly terrible choices in men. First off there's Tom, played with palpable menace by John Bindon, a real-life hard-man who would shortly lend his cockney swagger to Nic Roeg and Donald Cammell's *Performance*, a film that shares a generous dosage of *Poor Cow*'s creative DNA. Not being the sharpest card in the pack, Tom promptly bumbles a bank job and gets himself banged up. With casual inevitability, Joy moves swiftly on to handsome Dave, one of Tom's fellow hoodlums, played by '60s icon Terrence Stamp. But if Dave represents a tiny ray of hope, think again, for Joy is something of a feather in the

storm, her baby son the only constant in her life.

With the sleight of hand he's shown many times since, Loach suckers us into caring for, rather than judging, someone we might otherwise dismiss as a gullible idiot best suited to The Jeremy Kyle Show. We feel for poor Joy as she contemplates 'going professional' while scratching a living working in a pub where she gets groped and leered at by the regulars. Oh yes, there's some absolutely king leering in this movie; at one point Joy and her barmaid pal Beryl (Love Thy Neighbour's Kate Williams) decide a spot of 'modelling' for the local 'Photographic Society' might generate a few extra bob. Cue a phalanx of the most odious, sweaty losers ever to grace the silver screen, all steamed-up glasses and drooling chins, relics of a bygone age when that room upstairs at the local pub was a haven for amateur David Baileys to get their sexually retarded rocks off. The movie's intrinsic voyeurism is reinforced by Loach's penchant for secretly capturing shots of real people and integrating these into his narrative. Time and again his camera lingers on some poor unsuspecting 1960s fizzle on its way to the pub, the bookmaker or (hey, it's 1967) the boutique. This culminates in a scene

where Joy and Beryl indulge in a cathartic spot of revenge-leering at random passing geezers. You go, girls!

The semi-improvised dialogue is a wonder; people stutter, repeat themselves, talk over each other. You know, like we actually do in real life. It's so bracingly naturalistic, you're left wondering just how these results were achieved (Terrence Stamp has attested to Loach whispering conflicting directions into his and White's ears, deliberately catching them off-guard then letting them sink or swim). Loach also largely avoids a musical score, relying instead on the endlessly parping sound of the radio, its tinny melodies and moronic DJ banter a humorous counterpoint to the on-screen misery (although the less said about nominal soundtrack provider Donovan, the better).

Funny, sad and ultimately uplifting, *Poor Cow* is a shining example of social realism cinema done right. Still compelling after nearly fifty years, it is The Jeremy Kyle Show you actually want to see. Forget the lie detector test; this one's the daddy.

MICHAEL COLDWELL

★★★★★★★★★ 8



TERRAHAWKS (1983)

CERT: U / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: DENISE BRYER, JEREMY HITCHEN, WINDSOR DAVIES, ROBBIE STEVENS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Terrahawks unashamedly revisits the theme of Gerry Anderson shows like Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons and UFO. In the year 2020, the Earth is under the attack from the grotesque Zelds, an android from the planet Guk, who has established a base on Mars from which to launch her assault upon humanity. Fortunately, the Terrahawks (a covert organisation operating out of a huge country house in South America) are on hand to put a stop to Zelds's perfidious plans. In typical Anderson fashion, the Terrahawks – led by the cloned Dr Tiger Ninestein – have a fleet of sophisticated craft at their disposal, from the orbiting Spacehawk commanded by Lieutenant Hiro, the space transporter Treehawk (it emerges, Thunderbird-style, from a tree which conveniently splits open), the bulkier Battlehawk (the house folds open to allow the ship to lift-off) and its detachable Terrahawk command centre (Ninestein's personal ship) and the Hawkwing, a fighter aircraft which launches, Stingray-style, through an underwater porthole, usually piloted by part-time pop star Kate Kestrel and her co-pilot Lieutenant Hawkeye.

Familiar Anderson tropes, which are all warmly welcomed back in Terrahawks but what makes the show so different

from the earlier series that are so clearly and blatantly its inspirations is that it firmly abandons the slightly po-faced tone of Scarlet and UFO and is altogether a looser and more ramshackle affair. This is very much tongue-in-cheek stuff, its scripts (many written by familiar Anderson names such as Tony Barwick and Donald James under excruciating pseudonyms such as Anne Teakstein and Kit Tenstein) are played largely for laughs, mostly generated by the antics of the Terrahawks' army of circular robot Zeroids, commanded by Sergeant Major Zero (voiced with maximum fruitiness by Windsor Davies). The Zeroids clearly possess individual intelligence and are capable of independent thought, much to the chagrin of the ferociously machine-unfriendly Dr Ninestein. Equally hilarious are Zelds and her cohorts, the gurgling Jungstar and the brainless Cy-Star and the battalion of ludicrous alien horrors they free from suspended animation in their ill-considered attacks against the Terrahawks. It's hard to believe that even in 1983 the likes of Sram, the Sporilla and the Moid – Master of Infinite Disguise – were able to engender much more than muted giggles from the intended juvenile audience.

Terrahawks sees Gerry

Anderson return to his puppet roots but here, instead of the gantry-operated marionettes of the 1960s, the Terrahawks and co. are operated as sophisticated glove puppets (a process dubbed Supermacromation) that allows for a greater range of movement and expression but still doesn't really solve the perennial problem of how to make the damned things walk convincingly. The model work never really matches the sheer vibrancy and scale of the work of Derek Meddings (who by now had moved on to feature film production) but much of it is more than acceptable,

perhaps let down only by the rather unmemorable and generic designs of the Terrahawk vessels themselves, none of which have the sleek, colourful appeal of the classic hardware from the '60s Supermarionation shows.

Despite its shortcomings – most of the stories are just silly, disposable nonsense (although 'Space Samurai' contains an extraordinarily passionately-written confrontation between Ninestein and Zelds in which the former explains exactly why she has set her sights on Earth and the latter explains why the planet and the human race are worth defending) – Terrahawks is a lot of fun. Its sense of humour is relentlessly endearing and although it's far from Gerry's finest work (he later preferred to forget the series altogether), it's quite heart-warming to see him revisiting the style of television which made him hero to a generation back in the 1960s. Network has done their best to spruce up these episodes but they still look a bit soft and grainy (although a considerable improvement upon earlier long-unavailable DVD releases) and we weren't too impressed by the fantastically frustrating menus or the impossible-to-access special features. Anderson completists will be keen to add this one to their collections and we're rather looking forward to reacquainting ourselves with the even more outrageous second and third seasons.

Extras: Raw FX footage / Interviews / Extended version of first episode

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★ 7



STARBURST

DVD & BLU-RAY



THE DIVERGENT SERIES: ALLEGIANT

DVD + BD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: ROBERT SCHWENTKE / SCREENPLAY: NOAH OPPENHEIM, ADAM COOPER, BILL COLLAGE / STARRING: SHAILENE WOODLEY, THEO JAMES, ZOÉ KRAVITZ / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's that time of the year again: we have another Divergent movie at our disposal. The third film in this stretched-out YA franchise, *Allegiant* is one of the most predictable movies to be released in 2016, especially if you're one of those that have had to sit through not just this series, but also the equally extraneous *Maze Runner* series. Because you've been on this trip for far too long (even if it's only been just over two years), you can pretty much map out all the key plot points that are going to transpire on screen. Whereas *Divergent* just felt like an over-extended prologue in order to set up the characters

and their world, *Insurgent* felt like a natural progression with plenty of solid action sequences. But in the case of this, it doesn't solve any of the problems of the previous two films and just ends up taking many huge steps backwards, resulting in a quagmire of drawn-out exposition and bland characterisation. It is the worst of the series, and that's really saying something.

This re-treads a lot of familiar ground and repeats a lot of the same narrative beats and devices from the first two (another mind control scheme is included), but rather than improve or elaborate on them it feels like a lazy rehash more

than a proper sequel. The CGI is very distracting this time around, looking so obviously fake and synthetic, and the sci-fi interiors and exteriors of the Bureau look like something that was completely ripped off from *Tomorrowland*, which incidentally looks superior in comparison. Plus, there are multiple plot holes and lapses in logic that will only leave you feeling more and more frustrated as the movie goes on, and when the movie attempts to give you answers to all of these contrivances, knowing makes it even more confusing.

But, perhaps what's more frustrating is how bad the characterisation is this time around. Sure, Veronica Roth's concept of people divided into different personality factions still sounds like a stretch of the imagination, but we did see some fragments of real development previously (especially in *Insurgent*). Here though, all that development is squandered. Caleb is still a gooseberry, Peter is still a double-crossing arse, Christina is still just sort of there, and Four is still the same as he's always been, and actually steals the role of the main protagonist from the *actual* main protagonist in Tris Prior, which only ends up

taking away her agency as a result. Tris this time round ends up getting downgraded, and for a lot of it is reduced to a duped idiot as she is slowly being manipulated and conned by Jeff Daniels' obviously slimy David. Can we have Kate Winslet back please?

Sure, there are some ambitious ideas thrown in here and there, Shailene Woodley is still a solid lead, and Miles Teller is great as a snarky twit, but even those elements aren't enough to save this pudding of a sequel. Instead of trying to expand upon its core themes and concepts by developing them, *Allegiant* just bogs it all down in a stodgy mess of CGI and poor storytelling. Granted, it's not as bad as *Gods of Egypt* or *TMNT: Out of the Shadows*, but that's only because it's just so boring. Plus, this idea of dividing the last book into two movies is starting to wear thin now, which only speaks bad omens for the forthcoming *Ascendant*. Still, at least there's no Jai Courtney this time around, so that's something, right?

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★ 4



THE BOOTH AT THE END: SEASONS 1 & 2

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: JESSICA LANDAW, ADAM ARKIN / SCREENPLAY: CHRISTOPHER KUBASIK / STARRING: XANDER BERKELEY, JENNI BLONG, JENNIFER DEL ROSARIO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Man sits at the end booth of a lonely roadside diner. A waitress watches curiously as person after person comes to sit opposite him and talk – is he a journalist conducting interviews? A therapist? The truth is, the Man makes Faustian deals with these people. They tell him something they want – for their husband's Alzheimer's to be cured, for the girl from a magazine centerfold

to love them, etc. – and he gives them a task in return for that happening – from fathering a child to setting off a bomb in a restaurant. The only other condition is that they return to the diner regularly to update him on the details.

That's the idea behind *The Booth at the End*, a show that may have passed over your radar when it first aired in 2010,

followed by a second season in 2012 – but both seasons are now available as one DVD set. Sure, the concept may seem strikingly minimalist in a post-Breaking Bad TV landscape, in which we expect our shows to be blockbuster epics; this is exactly the opposite, as each season has just one set, with the stories playing out entirely over the diner table.

And yet these dialogues are remarkably compelling; Xander Berkeley's Man interrogates his visitors with laid-back sincerity, refusing to give direct help but guiding them into analysing their own flaws and desires, and the show invites us to take the same inquiring attitude. As their stories develop, it's fascinating to learn what makes these characters tick and how far they'd go to get what they want, and to see their tasks progress and even intertwine; the first season's strongest story sees one man tasked to kill a little girl, and another man tasked to protect the same girl, which results in some truly gripping viewing – even though we never see any of it happen!

The second season doesn't have quite the thrill of the first, as some storylines fail to escalate as excitingly as they should, leaving you feeling like little's happened by the time you get to the final episode. It does, however, give us some insight into the Man himself, leading to a very touching moment at the conclusion to a story about a woman who just wants to feel loved. Plus, even when some stories drag, there are more hits than misses and the pace of the series keeps it watchable; each season is comprised of five twenty-two minute episodes, so you can easily binge the whole thing in one night.

The Booth at the End may seem like the antithesis of *Game of Thrones*, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing; this sharply scripted series of interchanges shows that you don't need a record-breaking budget to make a show that's both intellectually and emotionally engaging.

KIERON MOORE

★★★★★★★ 8



THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS (1974)

DUAL / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: JACK HILL / SCREENPLAY: JACK HILL, DAVID KIDD / STARRING: JO JOHNSTON, CHERYL SMITH, COLLEEN CAMP, ROSANNE KATON, RON HAJAK / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In 1974, exploitation filmmaker Jack Hill was on a roll. With *The Big Doll House* in 1970, the Tarantino-inspired auteur began a successful four-year run that included *The Big Bird Cage* and *Foxy Brown*. That run ended all too quickly in 1975, with Hill having virtually retired by the end of the decade, but prior to that he released arguably the film that most signifies his personal vision.

An unusually dark

comedy/drama, *The Swinging Cheerleaders* is a film that selects the choicest clichés from the exploitation buffet and combines them with a flourish to produce a film that is inherently fun while still striving to satisfy the feminist agenda so symptomatic of Hill's better films. How much it succeeds at the latter is open to interpretation, but undoubtedly this is not a film quite as subversive as some from the era.

In order to write an exposé of their world, Kate (Jo Johnston) poses as a cheerleader for the college football team. As she investigates, she discovers a corrupted betting ring run by the school principle while embarking on an affair with the star quarterback.

At its core, *The Swinging Cheerleaders* is everything you would expect from a 1970s exploitation film, and more-so from Hill. There is plenty of sex and nudity, with sporadic bouts of violence and overly dramatic campiness, but there are some notable differences. The strong female characters that populate Hill's films are here, but in this instance initially principled heroine Kate quickly moves on from the studious journalist boyfriend to the hunky jock without so much as an ironic nod to camera. Said journalist then turns into the misogynist of the piece when he drugs the 'innocent' virgin cheerleader and casually invites some friends over for a gangbang. Instead of being shocking, Hill's film comes across as simply fun, with the

good guys - and gals - getting the best of the bad guys in the end. The gangbanger gets a good slap, the gangbanger falls back into the arms of her true love, and the betting ring all get their comeuppance. A little bit of darkness, but everything turns out fine.

By modern standards, much of what happens in *The Swinging Cheerleaders* may seem surprising, but that is in essence the point of an exploitation film. These are films of a time; films that tap into the extreme trends of the period and push the boundaries of taste through lurid and often offensive content. Approached in the right frame of mind, though, there is great fun to be had and Jack Hill is one of the greatest exponents of the genre.

Extras: Audio commentary with Jack Hill / Interviews / Q&A / TV spots

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★ 6



RATTLE THE CAGE

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: MAJID AL ANSARI / SCREENPLAY: RUCKUS SKYE, LANE SKYE / STARRING: ALI SULIMAN, SALEH BAKRI, AHD KAMEL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

From the opening shot of *Rattle the Cage* (original title: *Zinzana*), it becomes immediately clear that director Majid Al Ansari has been mainlining David Fincher and aspires to be an eye-catching visual stylist. As his camera swoops through the circular handle of a pair of scissors, it could inspire an exhalation of 'cool, man' that the rest of the film never reaches again.

Talal (Saleh Bakri) is behind bars in a tiny police station somewhere out in the middle of nowhere in '80s Arabia. There are no further specifics

given about the time or place and there's precious little to go on about why Talal has been jailed for much of the film. However, it emerges that it had something to do with a scuffle, and while the man that Talal is imprisoned for scrapping with is released on bail quickly, Talal looks like he has a long wait on his hands.

When a man named Dabaan (Ali Suliman) enters the precinct and brutally kills the only deputy on duty, Talal becomes the victim of a psychopath whose motivations

remain frustratingly vague. Trapped in his cell, Talal becomes a powerless pawn in this man's plan.

Inspired by the likes of Fincher's masterfully suspenseful and underrated *Panic Room*, *Rattle the Cage* visually makes the most of its single location. The characters are trapped, and apart from in a single virtuoso camera shot that emphasises the isolation of the location, the audience and the camera is too. It's a film set mostly in one room and with very few characters to keep track of. The limitations give Al Ansari the freedom to go crazy with his camera. It whirls and twirls, whizzes and whips through walls and down pipes, going anywhere it pleases uninhibited by physics.

The problem with *Rattle the Cage* is that, while it looks fantastic and Al Ansari is clearly a director with visual class, the screenplay isn't vital, urgent or suspenseful enough to keep audiences engaged. Talal is stuck in a cell for the entire film, making him an incredibly passive protagonist. He's not going anywhere and doesn't even clearly have much of a desperate desire to escape. Characters come and

go, but many of them feel like they have been jammed in simply to stall before we finally get to a climax.

Dabaan should be the film's secret weapon, entering the film whistling like he's just finished watching *Kill Bill* and performing for his captive audience (both Talal and us) like a typical Hollywood loony villain. But even he can't hold the attention of the audience as the film takes far too long in actually revealing what the hell he's doing hanging out in a prison after he's just killed a cop. When it finally does become clear what his plan is, the action ramps up as the implausibility increases, eventually flying right out the window with Al Ansari's hyperactive camera.

It's an action-packed climax that comes too late, despite plenty of earlier bursts of bloody violence. No amount of visual flair from director Al Ansari and DoP Colin Lévêque can paper over the fact that *Rattle the Cage* spends too much time stalling, and not enough time building real suspense.

PETER TURNER

★★★★★★★ 6



REPTILICUS (1961)

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: SIDNEY W. PINK / SCREENPLAY: IB MELCHOIR, SIDNEY W. PINK / STARRING: CARL OTTOSEN, ANN SMYRNER, MIMI HEINREICH, ASBJØRN ANDERSON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When you think of pioneers in the field of sci-fi feature films, only one nation springs to mind: Denmark. No, really.

Verdens Undergang (1916) and Himmelskibet (1918) are two of the earliest examples and they're both from the people who brought us LEGO. They're pretty good, too; Verdens Undergang is a comet-induced end-of-the-worlder while Himmelskibet still seems uncannily like Star Trek to this day. In fact, Himmelskibet is essential viewing and they're

both on a single DVD if you have a root round the 'net. But after this glorious-yet-silent start, the Danes left the genre alone for 43 years only to return at the back-end of the '50s creature-feature era. But once more they went for it with aplomb. The world would be a slightly duller place without Reptilicus.

The Danes are mining for copper in Lapland (and we know that's not in Denmark) but dig up the tail of a giant lizard-thing instead. Although they assume

it's a fossil, it clearly isn't as it's actually bleeding when they bring it to the surface. So they take it to Copenhagen, chuck it in a freezer and then accidentally defrost it by forgetting to shut the freezer door properly. Well it's more plausible than the electric blanket fiasco in *The Thing* from Another World (1951). As it turns out, this lizard-thing has the power to regenerate like a starfish (we don't like those) so they actually let it grow before it escapes and does to Copenhagen what the Big G normally does to Tokyo.

Along the line, we get a comedy caretaker (Dirch Passer), the chief scientist's slightly terrifying daughters (one looks like she wears her doll's clothes) and some woeful special effects. Seriously, while the Americans had been favouring Ray Harryhausen for this sort of caper and even the Brit's *Gorgo* (1961) used Japanese-style suitmation, what we have here is a puppet. A rubbish puppet, at that. Which is strange, as a bit of cash was clearly spent: this is in colour. Perhaps that's because they were trying to make Copenhagen

look tourist-friendly (hence it being in English) although the guy in charge of the swing-bridge who panics, opens it, and sends hundreds of fleeing Danes into the water (with their bicycles) would put most people off. And for fans of our NATO allies we get to see the Danish Army turn up with Centurion tanks (so that's who we sold them to) which might even be a sci-fi first. Throw in the Danish Navy on manoeuvres and you've got enough to keep this reviewer happy. Just a shame the movie's only female scientist (Marla Behrens) points out that blowing a regenerating lizard into a million pieces with a depth charge might be a bit dumb. Oh, and *Reptilicus* is a triphibian (it has wings) but, mercifully, we never see it fly.

Actually, while it's a bit silly, *Reptilicus* is great fun and a must-see if it's your mission in life to see every mid-20th century monster movie ever made. Everyone needs a hobby.

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★★★ 6



COCOON - 30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

BD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: RON HOWARD / SCREENPLAY: TOM BENEDEK / STARRING: DON AMECHE, WILFORD BRIMLEY, HUME CRONYN, BRIAN DENNEHY, JACK GILFORD, STEVE GUTTENBERG / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Having made a splash with his directorial debut, *Splash*, Ron Howard followed up his fishy tale with *Cocoon* in 1985. It was successful enough to spawn a less than satisfying sequel a few years later.

A group of quite literally old friends living in a retirement village spend their days, well, getting older, becoming less mobile, looking on anxiously as fellow residents die – a kind of Hollywood *Waiting for God*. Three of the old timers sneak out now and then to an abandoned house not far away where

an indoor pool offers some much-needed fun. On one such journey, one of the group reveals he doesn't have much longer to live... When a mysterious group take the house over, harvesting strange pods from the ocean and keeping them in the pool, the old timers find that their illicit swims start to have unexpected rejuvenating effects.

Cocoon is a lovely film, a kind of cross between *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *On Golden Pond*. It warms with a script mixing science fiction with very human

situations, it's funny – the scenes of the aged revellers dancing, flirting, and dive bombing into the pool with new spunk are genuinely delightful, the three old men talking about their erections is wonderful – and its heart is very much in the right place. Admittedly, some of the Oscar-winning effects haven't aged well and there are some shots of the aliens that look like Robin Williams in *Mrs. Doubtfire* when he puts his head in the cream cake, but overall they remain impactful.

But where the film scores most highly is in its touching and honest look at what it means to grow old. There's a genuine sense of friendship and shared understanding that, for these people, living out their final years in some shady pines rest home, this is it. When a second shot at youth comes along, who wouldn't take it?

The performances from the older cast are a joy, with *The Thing*'s Wilford Brimley a standout. Golden-era Hollywood royalty Don Ameche (winning an Oscar for his work here), Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronin are joined by the then-recent Academy Award-winner Maureen Stapleton (who won for Warren Beatty's

outstanding *Reds* in 1982), and young things Tahnee Welch (daughter of Raquel), Brian Dennehy, and Steve Guttenberg, wearing a pair of shorts so tight as to almost warrant a special effects credit of their own.

There aren't many films of this nature where the main characters are of pensionable age and this is one reason why it's such an affecting film, perhaps more so now given that many of the stars are no longer with us and that we too have aged 30 years since it came out. There's a reason why the aliens glow and flit around on wings and have been around us for thousands of years – they look like angels, carrying a group of old people away towards a new adventure in the sky where they'll feel no more pain and will never grow older.

The allegory isn't subtle but, when a film is this charming, it's far from old hat.

Extras: Audio commentary with Ron Howard / Five featurettes / TV spots / Trailers / Collectors' booklet.

ROBERT MARTIN

★★★★★★★ 8



Kevin Conroy is Batman. The voice of Batman, that is. For almost twenty-five years, Conroy has voiced The Dark Knight, from the iconic BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES onwards, through to The Justice League, the Arkham videogames and recent DC animated movies. He spoke to STARBURST about the adaptation of Alan Moore's classic (yet controversy-baiting) tale THE KILLING JOKE – the DCAU's first R-rated feature...

STARBURST: To many, you are the definitive voice of the Bat. How does that make you feel?

Kevin Conroy: Oh my God, it's funny, because it's the kind of thing where you book a job as an actor 24 years ago and you don't even know how many episodes they're going to buy. And then there's a second season and a third season and then *Batman: The Animated Series* became *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*, and that became *Batman Beyond*, and then that became *The Justice League* and then that became the *Arkham* games, then movies. You never know. It's a snowball rolling downhill. You just don't know how long it's going to go or how big it's going to get. There was no way of telling that it was going to be as successful as it was and last

as long as it did. I'm the envy of a lot of my actor friends.

So when you took on the mantle of the Bat, you didn't expect to still be voicing him all these years later?

Oh, of course not. After about three years of *The Animated Series*, Warner Bros took out a two-page spread in *Daily Variety* to thank all of the actors who had been involved in the show, because it was on the anniversary of the 100th or 200th episode, and it was amazing. It was amazing who had been on that show, because it came to be known quickly around LA. The booking sessions were a lot of fun. Everyone wanted to be in there. They started getting some amazing actors. I had no idea of knowing it was going to turn into what it turned into.

And now you're doing *The Killing Joke*! It's an iconic story, regarded by many to be the definitive Batman/Joker tale. Were you nervous at all, approaching such a big story?

I approached it pretty naïvely, actually. I'm not as much of a comic book maven as, say, Mark Hamill is, or a lot of other comic book people are. Mark always brings me up to speed on this stuff because he really knows everything about animation. It's amazing. I always approach these roles from an actor's point of view, as an acting job. Once I read this story, I thought, 'wow, this is incredibly dark. This is really a dark, scary story.' I wasn't surprised when I heard they had to go for an R-rating. The stories are always intimidating, because the characters are so big, the stories are so big, and the emotional arcs are so big.

It's an R-rated movie and, like the *Arkham* videogames, an older audience than the *Animated Series* of old. How does such an older audience and 'darker' story affect your performance?

The character's the same. You have to be true to the character. In terms of an actor's performance, it's the same. In terms of the storyline you get to play, it's more fun because there are more colours. He goes to more emotional places than he would in a PG version. I get to flex my acting muscles a little more.

Were you and Mark together while recording your performances? Is this something which had happened in the past?

We always recorded together for 24 years. This was one of the very few times we couldn't because he was doing *Star Wars*. But at this point we know each other's performances so well that I knew what he was going to do with it.

Bearing in mind that it's another of the big, iconic storylines, did you feel that you missed out at all when Peter Weller took over as Batman in the *Dark Knight Returns* adaptation?

Well, it's like the live action shows when they always use different actors for Batman. I think it's interesting to see how different actors approach the role. I thought Mark Hamill was the definitive Joker. I thought no-one would ever do it as well as him. And then I saw Heath Ledger, and he was brilliant in a different way. He just brought a whole different quality to it. It didn't diminish what Mark does. Mark is still, to me, the Joker. I don't own the Batman voice so when they use other actors, I have to bow down to their brilliance and accept that there are other actors who do it as well as me...

JOEL HARLEY

***Batman: The Killing Joke* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.**



Whilst some fans were a little trepidatious when it was announced just how many rogues-in-waiting and other Bat-characters were to be a part of this supposed Jim Gordon-centric show, **GOTHAM** has won over any doubters and become a firm favourite of many a genre fan. With Season 2 of FOX's **Gotham** now available on Blu-ray and DVD, we were lucky enough to grab some time with three of the show's key figures - **ROBIN LORD TAYLOR** (Oswald Cobblepot/Penguin), **CORY MICHAEL SMITH** (Edward Nygma/Riddler), and **SEAN PERTWEE** (Alfred Pennyworth) – to discuss how the second season unraveled and what lies ahead for the show when it returns later this year...

STARBURST: Oswald has very much transitioned over this season, but how much fun has the role been for you, Robin, in the second season compared to the first season?

Robin Lord Taylor: It's been incredible. I couldn't think that we could top what happened in the first season, but I feel we certainly did in Season 2. The rollercoaster that he went on this year was so much more intense for him. Having started this season as the king of Gotham, then having it all ripped away. And also, having lost his mother and then, of course, his father. And then, of course, his personality. As an actor, it's just been a dream. You want to portray all aspects of the character, you want to portray every emotion, and I feel they gave that to me this year. It's just been incredible to play.

One of the main arcs in *Gotham's* second season was the unravelling of Edward Nygma's sanity. Cory, how enjoyable was it to have that play out?

Cory Michael Smith: Oh, it's wonderful, are you kidding me?! Season 1 really tested my patience but Season 2 has been an absolute joy. But it all began in the first season with Tom Dougherty [who Nygma 'accidentally' killed]. To be fair, the first penetration was not his fault – Tom pulled the knife into him

– but what came of that was this release. He just let go, he took Tom to task for harming the woman that he was obsessed with and for being rude to him, and a couple of extra stabs just to express his pain of being disregarded for his entire life. That really threw him into this psychosis in the finale where he lost his mind and was so confused by these two sides of him, the one that showed remorse and the other one that was just so happy that he had this ability in

him to stand up for himself and to save the girl. Then it was a physical manifestation of these two parts of him fighting over each other until he realised that both of them are part of him and he needs to embrace them.

You mentioned how you found Season 1 a little testing at times. In what way did you find it a struggle?

CMS: What I'm very happy about in hindsight is we started as far away from villainy with



Ed as possible. What happens in Season 2, which is that he embraces all of these colours about himself that he otherwise denied access to feeling... he was a closed off individual and he holds a glass of wine over Kristen's body in the woods and say 'Thanks to you, I am a whole'. In Season 1, he was frankly a two-dimensional human, not just as a character but he was underdeveloped as a human being. So waiting for the events in his life that any of us experience that kind of expand us and grow us, it was just waiting for those was trying.

In the second season we see a lot of Alfred pulling back, that things are too much too soon, particularly when they find the computer in what's to become the Batcave. How was that for you, seeing as it was a slightly different approach from Alfred than in the first season?

Sean Pertwee: He's learning the hard way how to become a parent. Alfred is not perfect, he knows he's not. He makes a terrible mistake in Season 1 by inviting his past to visit in the shape of Reggie, who stabbed him. That's the turning point. The turning point to me was a very important moment, when we see the horror from twenty years ago. You saw the flipside to Alfred. And what's so clever about that is that they never tell a subtextual past by flashing back; they always do it by going forward. So you saw and learnt about Alfred's dangerous past and what damaged goods he is in the form of Reggie. He could've gone Reggie's way and he didn't. The family saved him and the boy saved him. So it was a very tenuous time because Alfred and Bruce weren't particularly getting on at that time. They were still butting heads. He was still acting very much the manservant to the boy as opposed to a paternal figure. There's a very telling scene where Reggie is teaching Master Bruce how to fight, and Alfred steps in as that could've been a tipping point. That's the great thing about our show; every one of these characters have good elements and bad, and it depends which way they decide to go. The show is called *Gotham* and it's about a city that moulds



people into who we later know they will become. The interesting thing, of course, is seeing how they get there.

Midway through the second season, this odd couple dynamic develops between Oswald and Edward. That was really fun to see you two play off each other, but how great was that dynamic to be involved in?

RLT: It was just a dream. If I could have every scene with Cory Michael Smith, I would be a happy guy. But I will say, just in general about our entire cast, we all genuinely have so much respect and love for each other. Every actor on our show elevates the next person. Everyone is setting the bar higher and higher, and it's just so enthusiastic and exciting to meet that bar and raise it again. We're just all so inspired by each other's work. Specifically about Oswald and Edward, they're both outcasts, they're both misfits, but they come at it from entirely different ways. So I find that their characters really truly complement each other, and I'm just so excited to see where we go with that in the future. It's going to be extremely exciting.

And Cory, has there been any talks of any time soon maybe seeing a take on the classic, iconic Riddler attire or do you think that's maybe a step too far for a show like *Gotham*?

CMS: There have been conversations. I don't know exactly the look we're going for, but I hope and I trust that, as the show has done and I feel as if I have done, I want to have a fresh look for the Riddler that is complementary to the history but...

Fresh but respectful?

CMS: Yeah, fresh but respectful. And part of it is that I don't care to be walking around in spandex. I'm very proud of what the producers, writers and myself have created here in Edward, and I would just like to have my own look.

ANDREW POLLARD

For the full interviews with Robin Lord Taylor, Cory Michael Smith, and Sean Pertwee visit starburstmagazine.com. Season 2 of GOTHAM is out on Blu-ray and DVD now, with Season 3 debuting on FOX in the US on September 19th, with a UK premiere expected to follow soon after.



AUDIOSTATIC

THE LATEST NEWS
FROM THE WORLD OF
AUDIO ADVENTURES
BY TONY JONES



John Dorney wins a Scribe Award

Big Finish writer John Dorney has won a Scribe Award for his story **The Red Lady**, which won in the Best Audio category. This is not the first success for John, as he also scooped an award in 2014 for **Iterations of I**. That time, he won the Best Spin-Off Audio Drama award. John beat off competition from four other Big Finish releases in this category.

John's story introduced new companion Helen Sinclair (Hattie Morahan) to the Eighth Doctor (Paul McGann) and regular companion Liv Chenka (Nicola Walker). The Scribe Awards are presented by The International Association of Media Tie-in Writers and judged by members themselves.

Radio Drama Revival

Fans of audio drama might want to visit **Radio Drama Revival** (radiodramarevival.com), a site packed with material. In the sci-fi section there are plenty of free downloads to tempt new visitors, including the recently released '80s cyberpunk adventure *Ruby and Tom Lopez*.

BBC Radio

There's a wealth of shows available from the BBC at the moment. **The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy** has started a re-run on Sunday evenings. This is one of those shows everyone is assumed to have heard, but here it is again, thirty-eight years since the first broadcast, for a new generation of fans.

There are plenty of other welcome returns including Eddie Robson's **Welcome to Our Village, Please Invade Carefully**. This stars Peter Davison (**Doctor Who**), Katherine Parkinson (**The IT Crowd**), and Julian Rhind-Tutt (**Stardust**). Would-be writers might want to look at the BBC Writers' Room for downloads of scripts from the second series of this popular programme.

Making a debut on Radio 4 Extra is **The Scarifiers: The Thirteen Hallows**. Terry Molloy and David Warner are Professor Dunning and Harry Crow as they encounter lots of chess-related devilry and a 1,400-year-old knight, Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr (played by **Torchwood**'s Gareth David-Lloyd). Fans of this series of madcap adventures might like to follow producers Bafflegab on Facebook, where they are considering crowdfunding a new series.

Radio 4 also had a repeat of the Mike Walker story **The Edison Cylinders**, a story in which a physicist in a sound laboratory restores some wax cylinders but the voice stored in them exerts a malevolent influence. It stars Jonjo O'Neill, Harry Hadden-Paton, Stephen Critchlow, and Laura Hyde.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

If fantasy wargaming adventure is your thing, **World of Warcraft** has something for you with the release of **The Tomb of Sargeras**. This is written by Robert Brooks and narrated by Steven Pacey (Del Tarrant in **Blake's 7**). The story comes in two parts and is free to listen.

BIG FINISH WE LOVE STORIES

Key titles to watch out for this month from Big Finish...

YOU'RE HIM, AREN'T YOU?

An entertaining and engaging audio book as **Blake's 7** star Paul Darrow recounts tales of his career and life story in his own words.

AVAILABLE AUGUST 30th

+++

TORCHWOOD 2.6 MADE YOU LOOK

Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) investigates a situation at a sleepy seaside town where no-one has been heard from for days. A suitably creepy entry to the **Torchwood** audio canon.

AVAILABLE AUGUST 30th

+++

DOCTOR WHO 5.08 CASUALTIES OF TIME

Falling into an inescapable trap, the Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker), Romana (Lalla Ward), and K9 (John Leeson) have to face what could be certain death for one of them.

AVAILABLE AUGUST 30th

To order, or for more information, head over to bigfinish.com

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for Starburst Magazine**

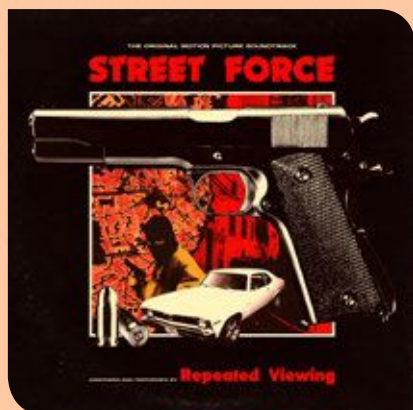
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REVIEWS

THE LATEST AUDIO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



STREET FORCE

COMPOSER: REPEATED VIEWING / LABEL: SPUN
OUT OF CONTROL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

One of the best aspects of the music Alan Sinclair produces as Repeated Viewing is the fact that, for all of the faux mythologising regarding his imaginary film scores, they actually tell a story through music. One can create artwork, a backstory, or some semblance of a plot summary, but all of that means nothing without music which could actually soundtrack said scenario.

Repeated Viewing nail it, every time, and Street Force is no exception. Essentially a revenge flick in the vein of Death Wish, but far dirtier, the music on the album pays homage to the work Herbie Hancock did for the Charles Bronson actioner, but ran through a low(er)-budget Italian filter.

The tracks here are alternately beautiful - opening cut, Family, with Alessandro Cassini on piano is an excellent example - or grittily dirty, like chase tracks Pursuit and Running. Those two are positively coated in grime - the latter in particular - and demonstrate the wow and flutter that leaves one wondering if maybe these might have been pulled off an unearthed 35mm film reel found in a back room somewhere.

If there's anything that gives up the gag, it's the fact that these Repeated Viewing tracks are a little too neat in terms of their simplicity. The most enjoyable vintage Italian scores always tried to do as much with as little as they could, whereas the Street Force album is a little too comfortable in its minimalism.

Something like Doubt works well, because it's a perfect fit for one of those wandering the streets, hands in pockets kind of scenes which inevitably sees the film's protagonist sitting at a kitchen

table, smoking a cigarette and staring into the middle distance. It's just a tone and a slight rhythm. One does wish a bit that there were a few more over-layered, messily complicated tracks like Searching, whose surprising electric guitar really nails the tone of the revenge genre.

The cassette release we received is the second edition, and comes on a two-tone tape of red and black. The cover art is the usual excellent pastiche of genre icons - masked killer, weapons - along with a badass muscle car. The great thing about Repeated Viewing album covers is that they feature iconography of the genres from which they draw influence, but don't exactly create an actual fake album cover or movie poster. It's the tell which indicates this is homage, not parody.

Again, a wonderful homage from Scotland's Repeated Viewing. In addition to digital and cassette from Spun Out of Control, it will soon see release on vinyl from Giallo Disco. No matter what your media preference, this is an album worth owning for any synth or genre heads out there.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★ 7



THE AVENGERS: THE LOST EPISODES VOLUME 6

ADAPTED: RAE LEAVER, IAN POTTER, JOHN DORNEY / STARRING: ANTHONY HOWELL, JULIAN WADHAM, LUCY BRIGGS-OWEN, HUGH ROSS, MICHAEL LUMSDEN, JON CULSHAW, NIKY WARDLEY, DAN STARKEY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As Big Finish reach the end of the road with their recreation of the first TV series of The Avengers, the sixth volume of stories comprises three adventures rather than the

four we have so far been treated to. We are pleased to report no lowering in standards, though, and three more entertaining tales recapturing the early 1960s.

First is The Frighteners, originally written by Berkeley Mather and adapted by Rae Leaver. Dr Keel (Anthony Howell) and John Steed (Julian Wadham) are on the trial of the Deacon (Michael Lumsden), a man who can arrange to have people intimidated. The story doesn't stop there, as it widens out into the murky doings of Sir Thomas Weller (Hugh Ross), a love affair, a confidence trick and several deceptions. Dr Keel gets plenty of action amidst the comings and goings, pushing Steed somewhat aside. The adaptation is solid, but the original story feels convoluted and could have been stripped back.

Ian Potter adapted the second story in this set, Death on the Slipway, from a James Mitchell storyline. Here we are back in espionage territory and a story of nuclear submarine deterrents, still relevant over fifty years later. Steed is undercover and soon encounters a Russian spy, and gets plenty of chance to flirt with Liz Wells (Niky Wardley) and be the hero. Less for Dr Keel to do but some great other

characters including Sir William Bonner (Jon Culshaw).

The final tale is John Dorney's adaptation of a Terrence Feeley story involving more secrets, a trip to the seaside and a funfair. Both Keel and Steed have plenty to do as they get drawn into this well-realised world of fortune tellers and a ghost train where Steed has to think fast to survive. Much of the action centres on Steed's mole, Harry Black (and his mother), as we are provided enough clues to keep us interested in the plot without being spoon-fed.

Big Finish released The Avengers: The Lost Episodes Volume 6 on July 20th; full details are available on their website for this and the rest of this range, with this release available exclusively from their website until September.

With the end of this range, we have to hope Big Finish gets a licence to produce some original work in this era of The Avengers. Until that time, this three-story set provides a great way for curious listeners to try this series at a lower than normal price.

TONY JONES

★★★★★★★ 8



GHOSTBUSTERS

COMPOSER: THEODORE SHAPIRO / LABEL: SONY CLASSICAL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Strangely, having just gotten out of an opening weekend screening of Paul Feig's Ghostbusters reboot, we didn't really recall taking in much of Theodore Shapiro's score while in the grips of watching the very funny movie. However, when we got back home and listened to the score on its own, we were instantly transported back into the film. That, right there, is the very definition of a successful film score: in the moment, you're completely involved in the film, but when you hear the isolated music, you're dropped right back into it.

Given the fact that Ghostbusters is essentially an action comedy with elements of horror, rather than a horror comedy, the score is rather more bombastic than

scary. However, Shapiro nicely uses horror movie audio iconography when necessary, with Mannequins being the highlight, emphasizing as it does the scene's obvious visual giallo influences with screeching strings and a dissonant flute.

There's some great use of creepy vocal choruses and grandiose strings for the pieces which score the various appearances of Rowan, the film's villain. The Universe Shall Bend, I Will Lead Them All, and The Fourth Cataclysm are all obviously tied to Rowan, but even in the scenes where his machinations are at work, there are nods to him, with the choral motif making at least an appearance, as in something like The Garrett Attack, which actually presages Rowan's first

on-screen appearance. It's a nice touch.

The best aspect of the score for many listeners will be the way Shapiro interpolates the main Ghostbusters theme into several tracks. It pops up rather early on, with Distinct Human Form, and appears again later on, frequently to boost scenes wherein the identity of the four Ghostbusters has once again been defined. It's sort of an auditory means of emphasising their accomplishments, and works remarkably well, likely due to the fact that Shapiro uses it sparingly, allowing its effectiveness to remain undiluted.

The downside is that Shapiro really utilises nothing but standard tropes, and the score – while effective in reminding one of Ghostbusters the movie – really just hits a standard series of beats, never really getting past rote action music. The “scarier” aspects of the score see him using more than strings + brass + chorus, such as the use of the waterphone on opening track, The Aldridge Mansion, as well as a pipe organ on The Universe Will End.

Past such momentary touches as those, Shapiro's Ghostbusters score is, effectively, a demonstration that the composer has really had to walk in two worlds with so much of his work that he's yet to really demonstrate the ability to effectively work in one genre. To name but a few, looking at the action comedy of Tropic Thunder or the spy comedy of Spy or horror comedy of Jennifer's Body, one wonders exactly what would happen if Shapiro didn't feel the need to pull his punches and just deliver a straight score in one sonic field. Spy came close and led us to high hopes for Ghostbusters, but ultimately, it only makes us feel good, rather than great.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★ 6



FALLOUT 4

COMPOSER: INON ZUR / LABEL: SPACELAB9 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For those not willing to drop the fantastic amount of money required for the complete Fallout 4 score on sextuple LP, there's a single picture disc vinyl LP available direct from the GameStop

online store. It contains eight tracks of Inon Zur's score and hits all the highlights from the 65 cuts composed for the game.

Obviously, you get the main theme, as well as The Last Mariner, which were the first two tracks released in advance of the game late last year. Much was made about Zur's need to redo some of the tracks at the request of game director Todd Howard, and listening to this compilation, one can really hear how the addition of electric piano actually warms the tone of the game's score.

Covert Action is the highlight here, with a pinging sort of sonar in the background, with muted trumpets lending the track very much a spy movie or secret agent feel. However, with the trumpets on mute and the mellow tempo at which it unfolds, it's right in line with the very subdued atmosphere that runs through the entirety of Zur's score.

Coming close on its heels in terms of musical delight is Rebuild, Renew; the track's scope encompasses violin and what could either be traditional Chinese instrumentation like the guzheng or a

hammer dulcimer, along with bagpipes, making for a haunting listen. It's epic and stunning, and the weight of the game and its quests through the wastelands is really brought home.

These eight tracks might not give the full trajectory of Fallout 4, but the way this disc is collated and sequenced makes for an excellent highlight reel, as well as some stunning cool down, chill out music for whenever you're trying to grapple with a particularly difficult aspect of Bethesda's game.

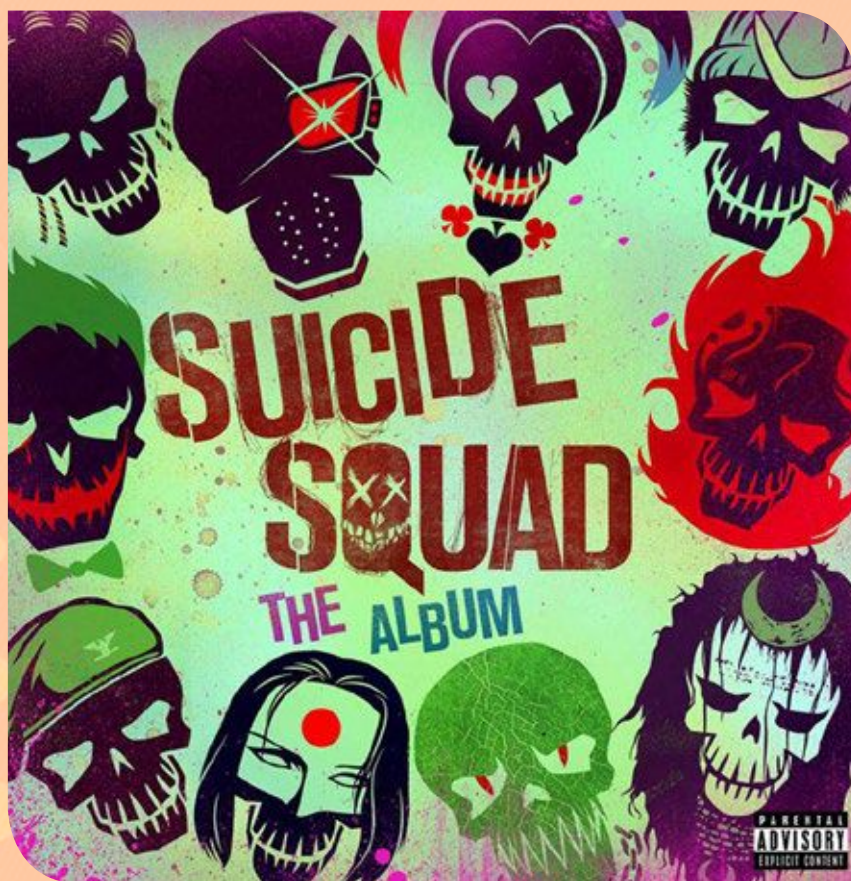
There are some crackles and pops on this pressing, but for a picture disc, it's fairly low-key and less than one might expect. The range is more dynamic than we would've thought possible, but the high end does fare better than the low. It's not as resonant as it could be, sounding a bit like it's been limited in some fashion. It's not quite tinny, but definitely not high fidelity, by any stretch. It looks rather good, though.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★ 8

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



When we were writing last month's column, **Stranger Things** hadn't been released, and now it's a phenomenon, beloved by everyone we follow on Facebook and Twitter (we only associate with people who have excellent taste). The blend of Stephen King monster tales, John Hughes teen angst, Steven Spielberg childhood adventure, and more than a little of John Carpenter's dark worldview is absolutely addictive. Right before we hit our deadline, Netflix announced on Twitter that they've heard fans 'loud and clear,' and that a soundtrack is 'coming soon.' Whether that means the score by Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein of **SURVIVE** or a compilation of songs used on the show (*Should I Stay or Should I Go?* an intensely obvious choice) is unclear, but we're already saving our pennies.

Based on the music used in the trailers, we thought the **Suicide Squad** soundtrack was going to be pretty great. Given that the trailers used Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and *Ballroom Blitz*

by The Sweet, among others, we thought we'd get some amazing rock and roll jams, but it appears that the version of *Rhapsody* is by Panic! At the Disco, along with a pretty terrible all-star hip-hop track called *Sucker for Pain*, with Lil Wayne, Wiz Khalifa, and Dan Reynolds of Imagine Dragons, along with Logic, Ty Dolla \$ign and X Ambassadors. It's kind of a mess all over - unable to decide whether it's hip-hop modernity or an oldies throwback, it wallows in inconsistency. The best tracks are covers: Grace's version of the Lesley Gore proto-feminist anthem, *You Don't Own Me* (although that came out on her album *FMA* a year and a half ago), as well as ConfidentialMX's orchestral take on the Bee Gees' *I Started A Joke*, featuring Becky Hanson. The rest is pretty disposable.

The score for the latest Laika picture, **Kubo and the Two Strings**, came out digitally from Warner Brothers on iTunes and Amazon earlier this month. The score, by Oscar winner Dario Marianelli,

seems like it combines action themes with traditional Japanese music - a natural fit, given the fact that Kubo the film moves Laika's standard 'kid against a supernatural force' themes to medieval Japan, while Kubo the character plays a traditional Japanese lute called the shamisen. The scores for Laika films are always top-notch, and the addition of Regina Spektor covering *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* only serves to level it up.

Marcos Zarvos' score for the film adaptation of Stephen King's *Cell* is out now digitally from Filmtrax. Echoing the 'pulse' which is at the heart of the film is a rather intense low end. It's such a stridently powerful score, we almost suggest staying away from headphones with this one. While *Cell*'s not a zombie movie per se, there's a definite sense of mindless hordes in the film, and Zarvos' score definitely works in that action/horror vein. The high-end melodies that nod toward ringtones in tracks like *Clay's House* are a nice touch, as well.

It seems like only last month Alan Sinclair - aka Repeated Viewing - released his **Street Force** album on cassette from Spun Out of Control. That might be due to the fact that it did, in fact, only just see its vinyl version come out via Giallo Disco in July. That being said, there's already a new Repeated Viewing album on the way. Entitled **Art Imitates**, it's the score to a short film on one side of the cassette tape, with a B-side of bonus material. The score for *Art Imitates* is a lot more ambient than Sinclair's past work, and while definitely being striking synthesiser work, it's a step towards something new in terms of tone and rhythm.

Italy's Rustblade continues their Claudio Simonetti reissue campaign. Out now is the score for **Conquest**, the gory 1983 sword-and-sorcery film from Lucio



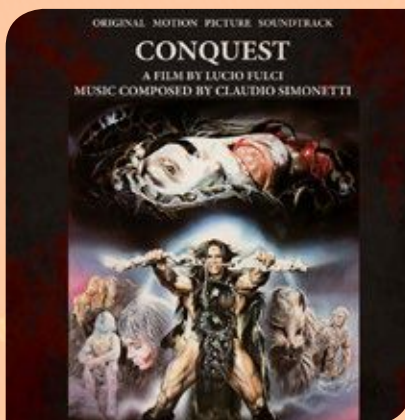


Fulci. It's available as a limited edition of 499 copies on smoke-coloured vinyl, along with a poster.

We missed the fact that Beat Records had released the Vincenzo Tempera score for Luigi Cozzi's **Paganini Horror** back in February. It marked the first time the score to the very unique and interesting 1989 horror film had ever been released. Well, Sub OST has put it out in a deluxe double vinyl LP on both limited colour and standard black wax, and priced fairly reasonably. Fingers crossed for the inclusion of the liner notes Tempera and Cozzi wrote for the compact disc version, but the fact that this heavy metal horror obscurity has made it out after over twenty-five years is enough to warrant snatching it up.

In further vinyl début news, Tiger Lab Vinyl return with their third anime score release. The label put out Osamu Shoji's **Wicked City** and Kenji Kawai's **Devilman** scores in quick succession last year, but they've been rather quiet since then, meaning it's been a solid six months since we've gotten any concrete release information from them. Happily, Tiger Lab is back with a bang: Masahiro Ikumi's score for **Perfect Blue**. The album will be released soon, with Zavvi having a limited clear vinyl variant in the UK.

Since its release in 2015, the anime adaptation of manga **Blood Blockade Battlefront** has been well received by fans and critics, and now the score by Taisei Iwasaki is available in an affordable edition from Milan Records. There's a two-disc CD version available in Japan,



but the import costs an arm and a leg via Amazon, so while this single disc edition might not be as complete, it's certainly more affordable. Fans of Cowboy Bebop's jazzy score will definitely want to check out Iwasaki's music.

While it's been reissued before on compact disc - with UK's Music Fusion version in 1981 and Japan's Air Mail Archive edition in 2009 - there's been no readily available vinyl version of Rick Wakeman's score for the 1981 summer camp slasher **The Burning** since the year of the film's release. Thankfully, One Way Static has released both vinyl and cassette versions, just in time for the film's 35th anniversary. The vinyl edition has two versions, each limited to 500 copies: one on orange/clear split vinyl and the other on clear/orange haze. The cassette edition is limited to 250 copies, and has alternate artwork. We're pretty excited to have this with some appropriately themed artwork with those iconic shears, especially since past editions have been pretty lame and tame.

Mondo's San Diego Comic-Con exclusives and new releases were absolutely insane. It's hard to figure out which whipped collectors into a greater frenzy: the six different **Inside Out** seven-inches, each with a different emotion paying homage to a classic album cover (our personal favourite being Anger and Black Flag's **Damaged**), along with the track *Bundle of Joy*, as well as another cut from Michael Giacchino's score specific to each version? Or was it the limited-to-1000



10-inch vinyl release of the original **Castlevania** score, just in time for the video game's 30th anniversary? We'd like all seven, please.

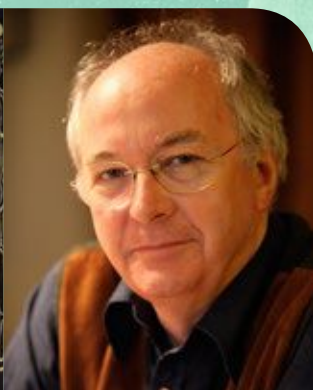
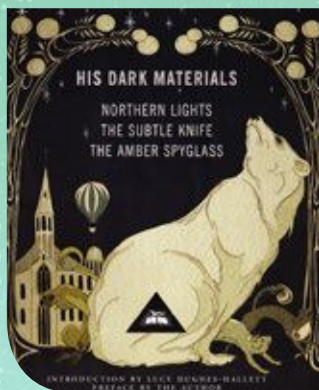
Joris de Man's electronic score for the 'visually intense' platform shooter **Velocity 2X** will be getting - appropriately enough - a double vinyl LP release from Black Screen Records this month. It's been available digitally from FuturLab for a couple of years now, but the idea of being able to blast this from one's turntables seems rather appropriate, given the electronic DJ style of de Man's music. It comes on two 180-gram vinyl LPs: one neon pink, one neon blue. The release is as striking as the game itself, and should be shipping at the end of this month.

It looks like Italy's Contempo Records is relaunching after several decades of inactivity. And what a relaunch - their first two new releases are reissues of Nico Fidenco's for the 1974 Mario Imperoli movie, **La ragazzina**. The original press on CAM Records was only ever released as a promotional record, and it goes for massive money. It's glorious ultra-lounge, and while it's cool, what really got us going was a definitive edition of James Bernard's music for Hammer's Dracula films. The recordings have been remastered from the original tapes, and for those of us who had our appetites whetted by 2014's **Dust Bug** reissue of the 'film on record' **Hammer Presents Dracula** are positively drooling right now.

Lastly, there's no better present for this Halloween than the scores which brought Marco Beltrami to genre prominence: the scores for the first two **Scream** films are coming to vinyl from Varese Sarabande. Now, the score for the first film received a deluxe edition release on compact disc for the film's 15th anniversary in 2011, but **Scream 2**'s never really received a full release. Well, this isn't the time for that, either. The limited-to-3000 LP is a vinyl version of the 1998 CD which contained sort of a highlight reel of the first two films on one disc. Cool, especially given the swanky new art featuring the iconic Ghostface, but a double LP release of the complete score for each film would've been more of a must-have for hardcore nerds. It's out mid-September.

BRAVE NEW WORDS

ED FORTUNE BRINGS
YOU THE LATEST
NEWS FROM
THE WORLD OF
GENRE LITERATURE



Literature Wales Announces Pullman as Patron

His Dark Materials author Philip Pullman is to be the first person to be the patron of Literature Wales, which is a bilingual initiative that encourages writing across Wales. It's better known for schemes such as the Young People's Laureate Wales, Bardd Plant Cymru (Welsh-language Children's Laureate), and the Writers on Tour funding scheme. It also funds the Cardiff Children's Literature Festival. Pullman is also president of the Society of Authors, an organisation that works to protect the rights and further the interests of authors in the United Kingdom and has recently criticised publishers for paying writers poorly.

DOCTOR WHO Author on Man Booker Long List

Doctor Who: The Drosten's Curse novelist Alison Louise 'A. L.' Kennedy is on the long list for the 2016 Booker Prize. Her novel **Serious Sweet** has been listed for the prestigious prize. The book is about two damaged Londoners, Jon and Meg, who are looking for a better life and takes place within a single day. None of the books on this year's list are particularly genre-related, which is normal for the Man Booker, as it has been stuck in a rut for many years now. We wish A. L. the best of luck.

2016 Seiun Awards Announced

The 55th Japan Science Fiction Convention (Nihon SF Taikai) has announced the 2016 Seiun Award winners. The winners were determined by a vote of attendees at 'Iseshimacon' in Toba. Winners highlights include:

Best Translated Novel: **Ancillary Justice**, Ann Leckie, Translator: Hideko Akao (Tokyo Sogensha)

Best Translated Short Story: **Good Hunting**, Ken Liu, Tr. Yoshimichi Furusawa (**The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories**)

Best Dramatic Presentation: **Girls und Panzer** (theatrical production)

Rowling Exceeds Expectations

The script book for **Harry Potter and The Cursed Child** is set to smash records again. The sell-out stage production has received rave reviews from all corners of the industry. The script book was predicted to be a big seller, and coupled with the popularity of the play, looks set to exceed already very high expectations. Potter fans are, of course, being well treated this year as a second script, for the movie **Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them**, is also on its way soon.

HP Lovecraft Inspires Ale

It may seem a strange choice, but a New England beer manufacturer has decided to honour one of the area's most famous residents, H. P. Lovecraft, in the form of a malty beverage. The drink, called *The White Ship*, is described as a 'crisp, delicious beer that blurs style guidelines' and promises to be as unique as Lovecraft's writing. The name, naturally, comes from the H. P. Lovecraft story **The White Ship**, the tale of a lighthouse keeper who boards a mysterious ship. In a further tie-in with the horror author, the label is designed by local Rhode Island artist Pete McPhee from Swamp Yankee, and represents an otherworldly journey.

2015 Shirley Jackson Award Winners Announced

Shirley Jackson (1916-1965) was a horror author who wrote the novels **The Haunting of Hill House** and **We Have Always Lived in the Castle**. The awards named after her are judged by a jury of industry professionals, and are given to outstanding achievements in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic. The latest winners are:

Novel: **Experimental Film**, Gemma Files (ChiZine Publications)

Novella: **Wylding Hall**, Elizabeth Hand (PS Publishing - UK/Open Road Media - US)

Novelette: **Even Clean Hands Can Do Damage**, Steve Duffy (**Supernatural Tales** #30, Autumn)

Short Fiction: **The Dying Season**, Lynda E. Rucker (**Aickman's Heirs**)

Single-Author Collection: **The Bazaar of Bad Dreams**, Stephen King (Scribner)

Edited Anthology: **Aickman's Heirs**, edited by Simon Strantzas (Undertow Publications)

SFWA Admits Game Writers

The Science Fiction Writers of America has allowed game writers to join its hallowed ranks. Founded in 1965, SFWA informs, supports, promotes, defends, and advocates for its members, and also administers the Nebula Awards. Allowing game writers to join the group has not been without controversy. Currently, the rules require one paid sale of a minimum of 40,000 words. This implicitly excludes salaried games writers, which apparently was an oversight which will eventually be corrected.

The Vampire Lestat Will Not Die

It seems you can't keep a good villain down. Anne Rice's inexplicably popular character the Vampire Lestat is due to return in the author's latest book, **Prince Lestat and the Realms of Atlantis**. Rice told her fans via social media 'I've been dying to get my vision of Atlantis into the public realm for years. And believe me, there is a full-blown vision of Atlantis in this novel.' The horror writer published **Interview with the Vampire** in 1976. It was later adapted for a film starring Tom Cruise.

Catch **STARBURST's** own book podcast, **Brave New Words**, via our website starburstmagazine.com and on twitter @radiobookworm.

ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES

COMING SOON



NIGHT WITHOUT STARS

AUTHOR: PETER F. HAMILTON
PUBLISHER: MACMILLAN
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 22ND

This follow-up to the epic **The Abyss Beyond Dreams** doesn't look like it will disappoint. Hamilton's well established Commonwealth series gets further explored in **Night Without Stars**. This time round, the humans from the planet Bienvenido have escaped the confines of their secluded planet. Unfortunately for humanity, they've brought with them the Fallers, alien beings who can look like anything they want to. If you're looking for plot twists, cool sci-fi concepts and a rip-roaring thriller, **Night Without Stars** won't disappoint.



THE HOBBIT FACSIMILE 1st EDITION

AUTHOR: J. R. R. TOLKIEN
PUBLISHER: HARPERCOLLINS
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 22ND

Be the envy of all your bibliophile friends by pretending to have a super-rare copy of **The Hobbit**. Back in 1937, when the good professor's fantasy tale first hit the shelves, no one expected it to become the phenomenon it is now. Only 1,500 of the book were produced at first, which makes first printings highly sought after by collectors, with originals usually hitting the £35,000 price tag. Most of us can't afford that sort of shelf candy, but this re-release will let even the most impoverished book worm have a replica of the original.



DEATH'S END (THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM)

AUTHOR: CIXIN LIU, TRANSLATED BY KEN LIU
PUBLISHER: HEAD OF ZEUS
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 20TH

Ken Liu's translations of Cixin Liu's novel **The Three-Body Problem** has allowed the premier work of Chinese science fiction to be accessed by an English speaking audience eager for fresh writing. **Death's End** is the latest in this series and follows the story of Cheng Xin, an aerospace engineer from the 21st century, who has woken up in the far future to discover that mankind is in an uneasy alliance with an alien race. Will her knowledge of a long-forgotten science upset the precarious equilibrium between two worlds? Will humanity flourish or die in infancy?



THE STAR TREK ENCYCLOPEDIA (REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION): A REFERENCE GUIDE TO THE FUTURE

AUTHOR: MICHAEL OKUDA & DENISE OKUDA
PUBLISHER: HARPER DESIGN
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 20TH

The Star Trek Encyclopedia came out 25 years ago, so the 50th anniversary is a great reason to relaunch it with fresh information and in a shiny new format. Updated and expanded, this edition includes an extra 300 pages packed with information, photographs and illustrations, with thoroughly researched and detailed entries on the characters, ships, and events from all things **Star Trek**. And in a very shiny slipcase as well, so it'll look lovely next to your DVD collection.



FIREWALK

AUTHOR: CHRIS ROBERSION
PUBLISHER: NIGHT SHADE BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 4TH

Chris Roberson is probably best known for his work on the comic book **iZombie**, which inspired the hit TV series of the same name. **Firewalk** is a modern-day supernatural crime thriller set in a fictional American west coast city. It follows the adventures of FBI Behavioural Analyst Izzie Lefevre. When local law enforcement asks for FBI assistance in hunting a sword-wielding serial killer, Izzie has to team up with a local cop to solve the case. Events do not run as smoothly as either hope, however, and a mysterious message leads Izzie and her cop friend down a darker, supernatural path.



AFTER ATLAS

PUBLISHER: ROC
AUTHOR: EMMA NEWMAN
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 8TH

This standalone novel is set in the same world as Newman's critically acclaimed work **Planetfall**. In **After Atlas**, we look into what happened to Earth once the pioneers of the Atlas left to explore their new world. It follows the exploits of Govcorp detective Carlos Moreno, who never knew his mother as she left as a member of the crew. On the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the Atlas' departure, Carlos finds himself in charge of a murder investigation. The victim? The man behind the Atlas launch. Will Moreno put the past behind him? Can he? Expect to be wooed by Newman's gorgeous writing and incredibly personal style.



JERUSALEM

AUTHOR: ALAN MOORE
PUBLISHER: KNOCKABOUT
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 13TH

Alan Moore wanted this book to be a monster and at a million words long, it looks like you'll have to get a specially reinforced shelf. Moore is rightly regarded as a comic book writing genius and pretty much redefined comic book storytelling. **Jerusalem** is only his second non-graphic novel, but it promises to be powerful in both shape and story. Given that it's meant to be 'mythology for beggars' and is written in a variety of styles, we'll be fascinated to find out if anyone can read it in a handful of sittings. This book will either change a generation or sit heavily on a shelf, unread by thousands.



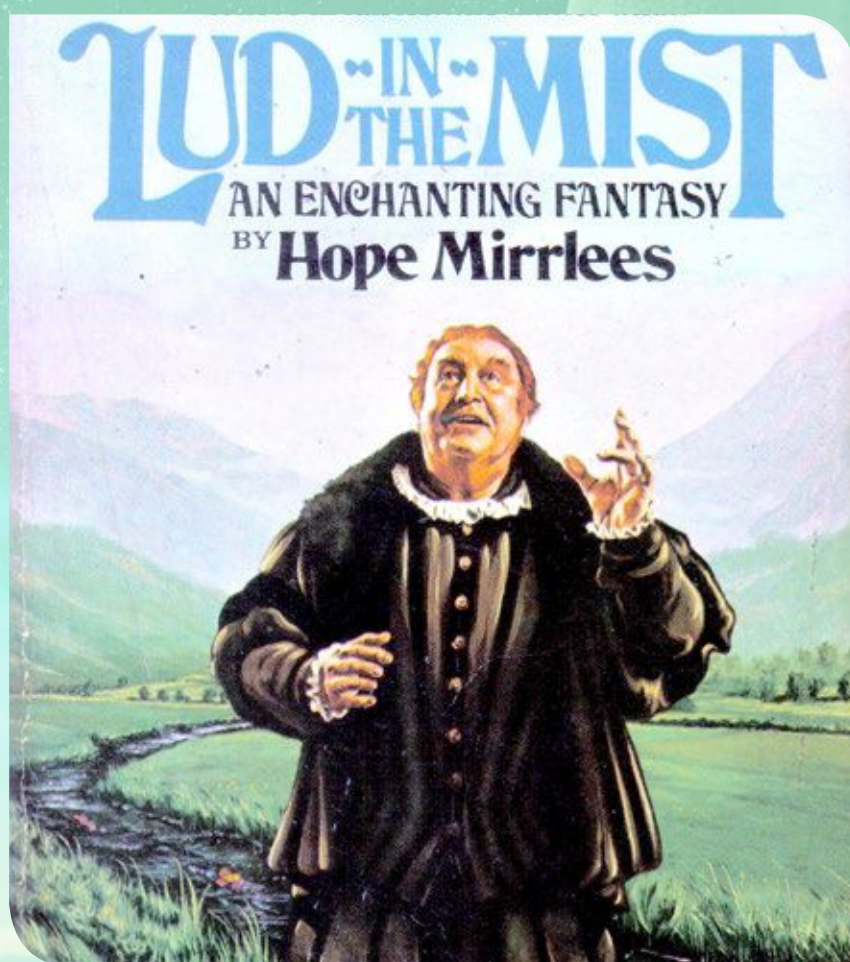
THE LIBRARIANS AND THE LOST LAMP

AUTHOR: GREG COX
PUBLISHER: TOR BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 11TH

The gloriously silly TV franchise **The Librarians** (which began life as an equally silly TV movie series) has finally found its natural form as a novel. Flynn Carsen and his gaggle of apprentices are after a book. Namely, Scheherazade's **The Arabian Nights**. Obviously, this one has mystical powers, and Flynn and chums find themselves in Las Vegas; apparently, a mystical lamp is doing the rounds. Is it connected to the missing book? Will the criminal maniacs known as The Forty get there first? Will the fabric of reality be undone, or will the Librarians save the world in time? Read it and find out.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



Hope Mirrlees was an English writer born on April 8th, 1887. She was raised in Scotland and South Africa, and studied Greek at Cambridge, and after school lived with the classicist Jane Ellen Harrison. She rubbed elbows with the likes of T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, and Gertrude Stein, and her work was published by Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press. She was well-travelled, and spoke multiple languages, but history remembers her for one thing: her fantasy novel, *Lud-in-the-Mist*.

In the Free State of Dorimare, between the Dapple and the Dawl, is the town of Lud-in-the-Mist. Once upon a time it was a duchy, but a new middle class rose up and transformed the town into a more equal democracy. Years have passed in peace, but now peculiar fruit is appearing in the hands of children. The town doctor is behaving strangely, and the mayor is in a panic, and the ghost of the old Duke has

been seen in the streets. It all points to one thing: against every law, Faerie is creeping back in to the town.

Lud-in-the-Mist is a beautiful book, and I don't understand why it isn't more celebrated. It has accessible, often enchanting prose, and characters so vividly drawn that you feel like you've known them all your life. It is subtly sinister, and full of twists, and amongst the faeries and the town drama is a murder mystery. This is fantasy in the style of *The King of Elfland's Daughter* or *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, a story that stays very close to the structure and traditions of British folklore. There are herbs used as protection against faeries, and faeries forcing humans to dance; the danger of eating fairy food is at the centre of the plot. The fantastic lurks on the periphery, as it does in folktales, and most of the story is about how humans deal with it. Fairyland as an entity isn't as important as the effect

it has on the people of Lud. Most of this is seen through Nathaniel Chanticleer, the mayor and our protagonist, who is affected by Faerie personally, professionally, and psychologically. Despite having been born long after the duchy was overthrown (and fairy fruit was banned), Nathaniel has been affected by Faerie since he was a child and it's now, with fairy fruit returning and his way of life threatened, that he must confront that connection. It's only when he does, head on, that the novel starts to reach its end. The tension between one world and another looms large in this book, and how Mirrlees resolves that tension is really fascinating, particularly when it's combined with the other opposing forces in the novel.

There are two big ideas explored in *Lud-in-the-Mist*: class and the Law. The clash of classes is a key part of Lud-in-the-Mist's history, and the catalyst for everything else in the novel. The end of the duchy also sees the introduction of the Law that, according to Nathaniel, replaces fairy fruit as the Luddite's 'delusion'. Both fairy fruit and the Law are these unreal things that people cling to, for better or for worse, as the novel tells it. Fairy fruit is also tied to the duchy and art and chaos, while the Law is tied to democracy and stability. Consequently, when fairy fruit starts to be smuggled into Lud, not only does that go against one law, but it threatens to return Lud to a way of life the people no longer want. Through Nathaniel, we see individuals and the town as a whole fighting against this change, all the while wondering whether it's possible to win - and, whether the decision to cut their ties from Faerie was even the right decision in the first place. This battle of ideas makes a lot of sense when you consider that *Lud-in-the-Mist* was published in 1926 and Hope Mirrlees was a member of the Lost Generation. Perhaps she was using her novel to make sense of the changing world around her, to reconcile the world she was born in to and the world the First World War had made. In the end, I think she settled on coexistence. One way of life doesn't have to die so the other can be, she seems to be saying. We can all work together.

The only fault I can find in such a wonderful book is in its typography, which is likely down to the publisher and not the original text. It's that perfect a book.

Lud-in-the-Mist is a wonderful novel, and one that should be celebrated as a classic of fantasy literature. It's beautifully written, and full of complex ideas, and the more I think about it the more I come to love it. This is a book for everyone, not just people who like fairy tales.

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



NEVERNIGHT

AUTHOR: JAY KRISTOFF / **PUBLISHER:** HARPER VOYAGER / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

Assassins are an odd focus for fantasy stories. After all, someone who will kill for cash has to be a pretty reprehensible sort of human being. However, fantasy literature does love its mysterious figures, and

assassins lurk in shadows professionally.

Jay Kristoff's *Nevernight* is the tale of one such hired killer. The book's main protagonist is Mia Corvere, a young lady who witnessed her father being executed for high treason. Bitter, angry and unable to find anyone who will help or explain why this has come to pass, Mia hides in a city built from the bones of a dead god. Luckily for Mia, she has a gift for the shadows; she can talk to them and they will help her out. This leads her to the Red Church; a faith of blood and death, an assassin's guild in all but name.

For Mia to join the Blades of the Lady of Blessed Murder and become the tool of vengeance she needs to be, in order to avenge her father, she has to best her fellow students. Final exams in the church are exactly that. Alas, all is not that ordered in the church. Unsanctioned killing haunts the halls and someone is murdering murderers, making Mia's job all the harder. It's a gripping read, though a pretty dense one as well.

Kristoff relies heavily on angst, drama and a broken main character to carry his story forward. He also leaves an awful lot of footnotes. This is a little intimidating at first and almost feels like everything but the kitchen sink is being thrown at the reader. Once you get into the rhythm of the thing, however, you will be enveloped in the world.

Kristoff is better known for his *Young Adult* fiction. His science fiction series *The Illuminae Files* has been optioned for a movie by Brad Pitt's company, Plan B Entertainment. *Nevernight* is markedly not aimed at the young; it's creepy, violent and has some very energetic sex scenes all the way through. Its tone is markedly adult and informed and Kristoff has clearly thrown all his engines into making this book big in every possible way. It's long, highly detailed, complicated, is set in a weird world where the sun almost always shines, and delves into topics as complex as the moralities of murder and loyalty to church and state. We predict it's also going to be big with fantasy fans; there's a lot to this book and many of us will be going on about it for a while.

If you love Robin Hobb or George R. R. Martin, you will adore Jay Kristoff's *Nevernight*. It has similar themes and is very heavy on the worldbuilding. It doesn't quite reach the heights of Hobb's *Farseer* trilogy in terms of emotional punch, but Kristoff has delivered a strong and interesting world which readers will find engaging and fun none the less.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★☆☆ 8



BEHIND THE THRONE

AUTHOR: K.B. WAGERS / **PUBLISHER:** ORBIT BOOKS / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

Sometimes you want a science fiction tale to explore great new ideas or delve into cerebral topics. At other times you just want a good old-fashioned raygun tale. Guess which this one is. *Behind the Throne* explores one question: what would happen if a ne'er-do-well smuggler became ruler of the galaxy? Not willingly of course, but out of necessity, requiring all the tricks of Hail Bristol's trade to bend rules and

occasionally break them, all whilst surviving the assassins who murdered her family.

This is the kind of book which promises non-stop action and delivers wholeheartedly, with the prose structured to fit a fast-flowing plot and focus primarily upon distinct singular actions or brief quips of dialogue. This makes it a breeze to look through, and that benefits the story as a whole, as despite the moments of drama, it's almost an affectionate parody of traditionalist sci-fi swashbuckling stories.

There's rarely a moment which goes by without something exciting happening, and that's largely thanks to Bristol herself. While the blurb hypes up her abilities, there's no denying she's the highlight of the book, with half the events being mostly an opportunity for her to snark while doing something awesome. With some obvious influence from the likes of Jenny Sparks and Indiana Jones, every sequence is brought to life thanks to her personal quips, commentary and actions.

Written from her first-person perspective, events flow easily around her inner thoughts, and this is one of the few books to truly nail such an invasive view of a character.

Unfortunately, while Bristol is the high point, the story tends to wither away when

not focused upon her. *Behind the Throne's* actual story offers few real surprises on the whole, thanks to sticking to tried and tested storytelling devices. There's nothing innately wrong with this, of course, but at times you can predict the twists in your sleep. Similarly, the worldbuilding is ill conceived. While there's an obvious attempt to hit the ground running with a short, sharp moment of action followed by a rapid introduction, the universe as a whole seems extremely nebulous. You're never given a sense of the baseline rules or true laws of the setting.

Behind the Throne is one of those books which honestly would have been more effective as a comic. The structure, characters, presentation and opening scenes look as if they would fit a more visual tale better than a literary one, and this is ultimately what holds it back. That said, the slick dialogue, snarky tone and Bristol's larger than life personality carry it through to the end. Grab it if you're after a fun if a little forgettable outing, but one with an excellent protagonist.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★☆☆ 6



NOT SO MUCH, SAID THE CAT

AUTHOR: MICHAEL SWANWICK
PUBLISHER: TACHYON PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 25TH

Where else could you find tales of time travellers partying till the end of time alongside magical horses and invading worm-like aliens? Michael Swanwick's latest collection of short stories brings together a delightfully unusual selection of tales, taking you on an endless journey across weary worlds and dystopian futuristic landscapes.

"Not so Much, Said the Cat" is the latest in author Michael Swanwick's collections of fantasy stories, following on from his previous works by bringing together another eclectic mix of tales making for a delightful read that you can pick up at any time.

With stories from far-

flung worlds and alternate futures, we're taken on an unusual journey across wild and wonderful landscapes, to the picturesque countryside of Russia, and even Hell itself, as we meet a savvy teenager who decides to take on the devil.

Each story is as compelling as the last, from a calculus problem that proves to be much more than meets the eye, to literary characters with self-awareness who decide to weave their own tales. Within this intriguing collection of short stories we're taken on a journey around several worlds where you're never quite sure what to expect, with plenty of twists and turns to take in along the way.

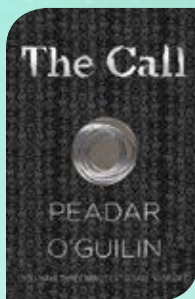
With plenty of stories to

dip in and out of with ease, whatever genre you prefer in the fantasy realm, you're bound to find several tales that entertain amongst this collection of short stories, and some that will certainly surprise you.

An entertaining read from beginning to end, with plenty of tales to amuse, making for a great collection of short stories. Besides, who wouldn't want to spend some time with a sly seductive circus performer, some con artists and a robotic scarecrow with a conscience, and all without leaving the comfort of your sofa?

LEONA TURFORD

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE CALL

AUTHOR: PEADAR O'GUILIN
PUBLISHER: DAVID FICKLING BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 1ST

Young People fear The Call, when they get transported and must spend 3 minutes and 40 seconds in the nightmarish Grey Lands. Any second, they could wake up in the land alone, hunted by its

infamous, terrifying inhabitants - with the knowledge that in all probability, there won't even be enough of their body to bury when their time is up and they return home.

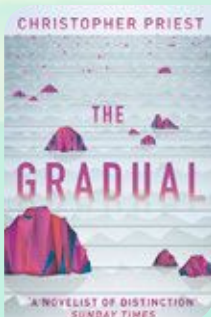
The Call, by Peadar O'Guilin, is a benchmark of outstanding, suspenseful fantasy in the young adult genre, and it simply demands to be read. Every new chapter weaves another intricate thread into the overall fantastical plot, which, coupled with the great writing, leads you into the grips of a heart-stopping fear that literally any character you love can be 'called' and face death at any time. In all honesty, even out of either fascination or horror, you will not want to stop reading The Call until you reach the last page, the plot and writing is so

enthraling. Nessa is without doubt the standout character, with her wit and survival instinct leading to you practically praying for her survival by the end of the first chapter. Having a girl with a disability being one the most courageous, talented, and fearless out of her peers - let alone the protagonist of the novel - was also very refreshing, as no one can now argue that people with disabilities would be unfit or unable to keep up with the intricacies of danger or a fantasy world! With The Call, O'Guilin manages to craft a book that introduces you to captivating Irish folklore, while simultaneously creating a diverse and realistic cast of teenage characters, and due to the depth and realism that O'Guilin gives them through his

writing, you will definitely shed a tear when some of them don't return from their Call alive. Not only that, but the world of The Call is incredibly real, that in some instances you feel almost as if you are living through your Call along with the characters; the bleak world just appears alive and pulsing, in front of your eyes. That, and O'Guilin seems to inject adrenaline into the very words on the page. This book will be like nothing you've ever read before, your heart will race, your hands will shake, but you will love every second. It feels as if The Call is a book that has lightning embedded in its pages - it's absolutely electrifying.

CHLOE SMITH

★★★★★★★★★★ 10



THE GRADUAL

AUTHOR: CHRISTOPHER PRIEST
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 15TH

Ever struggled to get back into the swing of things after a long-haul journey? It's a wonder we bother going abroad at all, what with all the time, money and sanity the traveling part of it drains out of us. The new novel from Christopher

Priest concerns itself with the monkey business of foreign transit - the time zone problems, the dehumanising netherworld of departures and arrivals, the bizarre regulations, the deeply unfriendly processes (ever encountered those hideous robotic passport scanners at Stanstead?) - but develops the story potential of these necessary butt-pains in intriguing and unexpected ways.

Alessandro Sussken is a gifted young composer growing up under the rule of an oppressive fascist junta. When his older brother is drafted against his will for military service somewhere within the mysterious, uncharted island group Sussken can just about glimpse from the attic window of his family home, he feels a strong calling to journey there himself. This he eventually does as part of a band of musicians who are granted

rare access to the islands for a concert tour, unaware that the many boat trips involved will have unforeseen, life-changing effects both on him and those he loves.

In his first-person narrator, Priest vividly conjures the inner voice of a serious-minded artist who is compelled by instinct to return to the islands, in the face of the dangers they pose to him, in search of answers to questions that seem to reach out from the very rock itself. This essentially lonely pursuit is punctuated by a series of encounters with a mysterious bunch known as 'adepts', a lethargic cohort of knife-flashing weirdos who hang out at every arrival gate and who become an increasingly significant presence. It also helps no end that Sussken is a dab hand with the violin.

The Gradual returns Priest to the Dream Archipelago, the

enigmatically musical topography he's mapped and explored in a number of previous novels and short stories, although it should be added that no prior knowledge of these stories is required to enjoy this slow-burning excursion. His character pool here is small and deftly realised while the 'gradual' of the title is an absolute beauty of a concept, artfully unveiled over the course of the novel until you're as immersed in its mind-expanding mystery as the protagonist.

Quietly compelling but not without some well-timed emotive fireworks, The Gradual is a captivating odyssey from a true visionary. Take it with you the next time you set off abroad; it may just get you there before you know it.

MICHAEL COLDWELL

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

FANTASYCON



Fri 23 - Sun 25 Sept 2016

The Grand & The Royal Hotel

Scarborough

Tickets: **£50** (non members)
 £40 (BFS members)

FANTASYCON heads to the seaside in 2016 at two of Scarborough's stunning beachfront hotels. With a packed programme of panels, readings, workshops, book launches and a range of superb Guests of Honour to be announced, plus plenty of classic British holiday fun to boot, this is an event not to be missed for **FANTASYCON** veterans and newcomers alike.

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VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS
MONITOR DUTY
TO BRING YOU THE
LATEST FROM
THE WORLD OF
COMIC BOOKS



of which was revealed to be a slight bluff anyway), but there's enough that I won't have to spend my last month in the **Watchtower** chair struggling to meet the word count and ultimately resorting to reporting on *Archie* comics (you know how it is), whoever he might be crossing paths with at the time (although *Predator* and *Judge Dredd* were good ones, I'll give him that).

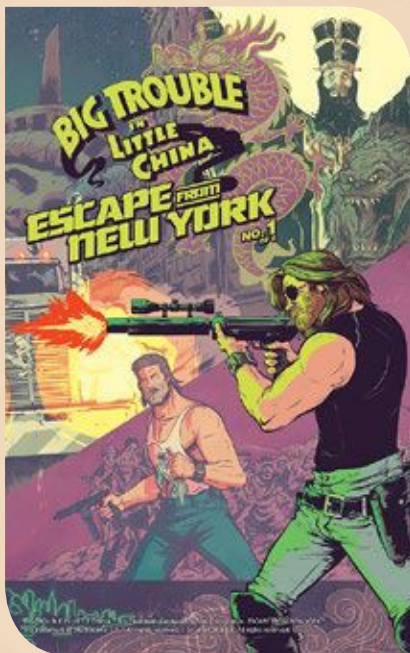
No, this month, we're off to a good start with President Obama himself showing up in *Suicide Squad: Rebirth*, relaunched with a team remarkably close to that of the movie – coincidentally released the same week. No, Obama isn't a member of Task Force X and nor, unfortunately, is he filling in for Amanda Waller, instead calling upon the Wall to be held responsibility should her black ops squad go too far. Issue One deals with leader Rick Flag being held in Guantanamo Bay, recruited by Waller... but sadly not called upon to deal with one Mister Trump and a very different kind of Wall. We can but hope.

Ready for her live action début, Harley Quinn also gets her own relaunch in *Harley Quinn: Rebirth*. Expect skimpy costumes, 'hilarious' violence and more Deadpool-esque Tumblr/Reddit humour, as though that's what the world needs more of. The latter, by the way, is said to make his own cameo... sort of... facing off with Quinn under the moniker Red Tool. *Harley Quinn: Rebirth* #1 is out now, brought to you by the book's original creative team of Amanda Conner, Jimmy Palmiotti and artist Chad Hardin. Expect either insufferability or high amusement, depending on one's tolerance for Harley Quinn and/or Deadpool.

Now, for many, the title *All-Star Batman* has either some really good or some really bad connotations. For the former, it's Frank Miller allowed to let rip with his worst impulses, delivering (some of) the most bizarre, wrongheaded Batman action this side of, um, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice - Ultimate Edition* (I say it with love). For the latter, it's Frank Miller allowed to let rip with his worst impulses, delivering (some of) the most bizarre wrongheaded Batman action this side of, um, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* - theatrical release (I say it with deep disappointment). DC has rekindled the title with this, a true all-star team-up of Scott Snyder and John Romita Jr., joining forces for their Batman versus Two-Face story. Not a sequel (or even a

Sad news, ladies and gentle-readers of STARBURST, and, more accurately, readers of this very column. It's been a blast, but this month marks my retirement from **Watchtower** duties, as I hang up my keyboard, click off the Internet and head off to pastures new (literally China). But before I head off - news!

At least I'll be going out on a high as there are juicy tidbits from SDCC and more from the wake of DC's *Rebirth* and Marvel's now constant striving for newness and pushing of the status quo. Alas, nothing so revolutionary as Doctor Manhattan, official DC Universe resident, or Steve Rogers, agent of HYDRA (one



bloody ending) to *All-Star Batman and Robin*, then.

With no goddamn Batman in sight, Snyder and Romita will deliver a Batman and Two-Face road trip in which the two do battle, fight in fields outside of Gotham City, and have deep dark meaningful conversations about duality and such. At the very least, we can count on an exciting story from Snyder and great visuals from the always wonderful Romita Jr. (whose Batman is particularly excellent - see his Batman v Punisher story). But then, we said that about Frank Miller and Jim Lee too...

In news surely no-one saw coming, Garth Ennis is coming to DC Comics. No deconstructed superheroes or war stories about tanks, though. No, renowned foul mouth and rogue Ennis is taking over one of the Hanna Barbera lines (!), writing a Dastardly and Muttley Book (!)

Following the success of their collaborations with IDW Comics, DC will be joining forces again for sequels to their *Star Trek/Green Lantern* crossover and *Batman/Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* tale. The former being a meeting of Chris Pine's *Trek* rebootuniverse (now actually feeling like proper *Trek* in *Star Trek Beyond*) and GL Hal Jordan, this one will no doubt offer more of the same. How much of a good thing this is remains to be seen, the first thing being a barely readable mess of lens flare and pretty much everyone getting a power ring of their own. Don't tell anyone, but the X-Men one was better...

The second Batman/Turtles crossover, however, is something a little different... this time it's inspired by the popular animated versions of the characters. That's right, the Bruce Timm Animated Series Batman (and presumably sidekicks), joining forces with the Turtles (Nickelodeon's, not the older cartoon version) for the best



crossover '90s animation never made. *Star Trek/Green Lantern 2* will hit this winter, bringing back the original team of Mike Johnson and Angel Hernandez. *Batman/TMNT Adventures* is due November, teaming writer Matthew K. Manning with artist Jon Sommariva.

And now, inevitably, we flip channels to the Marvel side. In the wake of *Civil War II*, Bruce Banner is dead, and this October tells the tale of what happens afterwards (not decomposition). With Banner's body in the hands of the, uh, Hand, it's likely we'll see Bruce resurrected sooner rather than later, and probably evil into the bargain. As opposed to just angry, like his smashing counterpart.

Elsewhere, a mystery is solved as it's revealed that Tony Stark's mother is... drum roll... wait for it... nobody important. Stark has been looking for his mother for a while now, and in *International Iron Man #5*, it emerges that she is a lady named Amanda Armstrong. Worry not, next month's #6 promises an explanation, and for it all to tie into *Civil War II* somehow.

The big Iron Man news, however, is Marvel's revelation that we're due a new body in the armour - and not an Iron 'Man' at all. Supporting character Riri Williams is set to take on the mantle, with the book relaunching again at issue #1. It's another move in the right direction for Marvel, Riri being a young black woman who created her own set of armour during *Civil War II*. Now with the battle over, Stark will be stepping down and letting Williams take his place. *Invincible Iron Man #1* launches this fall, sans its most famous Iron Man. Iron Maiden, anyone?

Ah, and there are more clones for Spider-Man as *The Clone Conspiracy* is launched - beginning with the death of a beloved member of the Spider family. Because that's just what poor Spidey needs - more clones and dead friends/family. *The Clone Conspiracy* is due from



October, accompanied by lovely, lovely cover art from Alex Ross.

Beyond that, more Deadpool. Deadpool doing Shakespeare (Shakespeare), the 'shared' origin of he and Venom (revealing that Wade Wilson was the symbiote's original choice of host over poor Eddie Brock), the transformation of comic book Negasonic Teenage Warhead into a version closer to the movie, and his appearing in *Harley Quinn: Rebirth #1* (but not really - see literally a few paragraphs ago). Check out every comic book store, in almost every single comic book, all of the time for your Deadpool fix.

And finally... What better way to wrap up a month/*Watchtower* viewing career than with a good crossover? And this one's a doozy. Kurt Russell is set to meet Kurt Russell in the mother of all Kurt Russell Krossovers - *Big Trouble in Little China/Escape from New York*, from BOOM! Studios. Yes, Jack Burton (Russell) will meet Snake Plissken (Russell) when Burton is transported to the dystopian future of, um, 1997. Writer Greg Pak and artist Daniel Bayliss will handle the adventure, which comes with director John Carpenter's blessing. *Big Trouble in Little China/Escape from New York*, a thing that actually exists, is due this October, missing only a Michael Myers and Stuntman Mike (not Carpenter, but just imagine it).

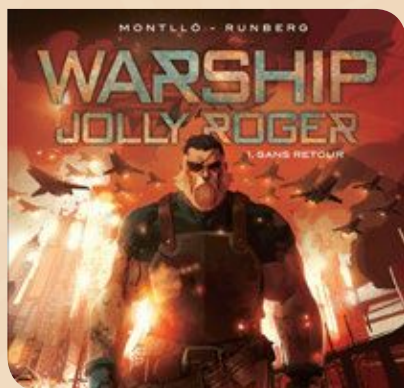
And so, for the final time (for me), we wrap up **View From the Watchtower**, powering down the monitors and leaving a little handover for whoever takes up the mantle next (easy on the Archie news). Still, I remain available at the usual e-mail and Twitter handles, always happy to chat comics.

Until the inevitable comic book-style resurrection, then...

Joel Harley can be contacted at: joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com and tweeted @joelharley

REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



WARSHIP JOLLY ROGER

WRITER: SYLVAIN RUNBERG / ARTIST: MIQUEL MONTLLÓ / PUBLISHER: MAGNETIC PRESS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ever since the Millennium Falcon first took flight, the image of the ragtag band of space-faring criminals has been engrained in science fiction. The trope was perhaps perfected with Joss Whedon's cult TV series *Firefly*, no doubt an influence on *Warship Jolly Roger*, the new comic series from Sylvain Runberg and Miquel Montlló.

This first 120-page volume opens amid a prison riot on planet Tullanium. Four mismatched convicts make a dash for a ship together – and there we have our set-up. As they're on the run from the sinister authorities of the Confederacy, we get to know these characters. Jon Tiberius Munro is a former military officer imprisoned for a war crime he was forced to commit. Alisa Rinaldi is a notorious freedom fighter. Nikolai Kowalski is a violent and hot-tempered smuggler. And 'Thirteen' is a child genius who killed his parents for reasons unknown.

So while you may recognise some well-worn sci-fi tropes, Runberg's story is excitingly plotted, with high stakes and great action, and the way this team develops, with hints to their pasts peppered throughout, is a joy to read. Munro, who takes the lead, is the most compelling character; his personal beef with Confederate President Vexton propels the story forward and creates conflict within the team, as his desire for revenge puts others in danger. The reveal of Thirteen's past is also very well handled, though Alisa, the sole female member of the crew, remains less fleshed out than she could be – even when a member of her family is brought into the story, she still feels sidelined.

Outside of the main crew, the world of

Warship Jolly Roger has clearly had a lot of thought put into it. Side characters, from black market dealers to Vexton's military advisors, all have their own distinct characteristics, meaning that the dialogue, a few awkward moments of exposition aside, always feels believable and pacy. Montlló has done a great job of designing characters, settings, and spacecraft alike – his style is cartoony enough to fit the fast and fun story and yet detailed enough to give the world an edge of grittiness. There's a cinematic finish to his use of lighting and colour, giving each planet visited its own palette which immediately gets across a mood – the use of oranges and browns for worn-down worlds and greys and blues for the presidential cruiser again brings to mind *Firefly*.

But that's a comparison worth repeating, because fans of *Firefly* will love *Warship Jolly Roger* – it's a rip-roaring space adventure with energetic artwork, a well-developed universe and characters who are, for the most part, a delight to spend time with. The book ends on a cliffhanger, and we'll be eagerly awaiting volume two.

KIERON MOORE

★★★★★★★ 8



DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY: A SPOON TOO SHORT

WRITER: ARVIND DAVID / ARTIST: ILIAS KYRIAZIS / PUBLISHER: IDW / RELEASE DATE: SEPT 22ND

From the mind of the late Douglas Adams (*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*), Dirk Gently's adventures continue with Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency: A Spoon Too Short from writer Arvind David. If you are unfamiliar with the character, he's a holistic detective who believes in the fundamental interconnectedness of all things. He's weird and unorthodox but he gets the job done with much hilarity throughout. *A Spoon Too Short* is a wonderful blend of mystery and science fiction that continues the wacky life and career of our oddball protagonist.

Illustrator Ilias Kyriazis and colourist Charlie Kirchoff have done an excellent job in creating a unique and quirky style that brings Dirk Gently and the world around him to life. Kyriazis really knows how to accentuate certain features and make memorable characters stand out, his cover art is brilliantly eye catching and he gets the right amount of sci-fi, noir and comedy in all his pages. We most certainly dig Dirk's ridiculously big hair. There are also some beautiful variant covers by Robert Hack (*Sabrina the Teenage Witch*) to get a hold of.

Arvind has done a great job in continuing Dirk's adventures and

keeping the fundamental elements that Douglas Adams created. There are a few weird choices within the character development making it rather unclear whether the creators are trying to make a joke out of objectifying women or if they're trying to make an excuse for having a female character in a raunchy outfit. They obviously know sex sells, but either way it doesn't really work as it feels too forced; it's also the same when characters describe themselves as being stereotypical. These are small hiccups in an otherwise entertaining story, as Arvind knows how to grip the audience and with his previous experience writing screenplays, he also adds a lot of melodrama and spice that's perfect for this genre.

SAMANTHA WARD

★★★★★★★ 8





JUDGE ANDERSON: THE PSI FILES VOLUME 5

WRITER: ALAN GRANT / ARTIST: VARIOUS /
PUBLISHER: 2000 AD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Grud on a Greenie, everyone's favourite Psi Judge returns in the latest instalment of The Psi Files, a chronological collection of her own Dredd-less adventures. The Sisters of Death, giant City Block robots

and death cults all make up the roll call in this meaty combination, showcasing the best of Cassandra Anderson's heart, wit and mind.

Not blessed with her own weekly strip like resident celebrity Dredd, the stories here are all on the longer side, leading to a less hectic feel than your average Dredd collection, and plenty to savour. Seven stories are collected, all culled from the pages of the Judge Dredd Magazine and written by the man synonymous with Anderson, Alan Grant. Not a short tale among them all, that's like seven trades for the price of one – each worthy of your time.

Out of the gates so strong, the book peaks early with Lucid, an Arthur Ranson-illustrated tale in which Anderson does battle with the Sisters of Death as they unleash a killer virus upon Mega City One and attempt to regain entry into the dimens(sss)ion. For good reason, Ranson will be many folks' favourite Anderson artist (the incomparable Brett Ewins aside) and he doesn't disappoint here, a fine blend of realism (his Big Meg is brilliantly mundane yet sharply detailed, and don't think we didn't notice that cock sticking out the side of that building on page 11) and Gothic horror. He also does a fine line in body horror too, with plenty of burping pustules, nightmarish visions and the gorgeously ghastly siblings of Death. A fantastic read, Lucid is worth the price of entry alone, especially for fans of the Death

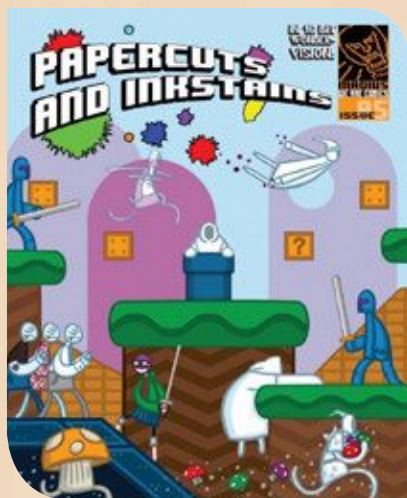
family and bigger elements of Mega City history (usually left for Dredd to deal with).

You're not even nearly done though, with Big Robots, Wiierd, Biophyle, The House of Vyle, The Trip and Stone Voices all still to come. Spoiled rotten by the work of Ranson, you'll be hard pressed to find anything quite as good in the pages which follow in terms of art – and one's enjoyment will very much depend on a fondness/tolerance for Boo Cook, whose work fluctuates in quality throughout. The longer stories do mean that there's less variety for your buck – all Grant, and mostly Cook. He hits his stride for The Trip and Voices though, which is among the book's best work. Dave Taylor shows up too for Big Robots, a fun story which unfortunately wears out its welcome through time. Lucid aside, there are strong action vibes to this one, which is a shame; Anderson is at her best when dealing with the more weird, horror-orientated end of the Big Meg spectrum.

If The Psi Files #05 is somewhat hit and miss, that's only because the quality we've come to expect from 2000AD and Anderson by now is so Grud-damn high. It may reach classic territory only once, but that's still more than enough to earn a wholehearted recommendation. Who needs Ol' Stoney Face anyway?

JOEL HARLEY

★★★★★★★ 7



PAPERCUTS & INKSTAINS #5

WRITER: MIKE SAMBROOK, ROB JONES /
ARTIST: BOB TURNER, PAUL MOORE, MIKE
SMITH / PUBLISHER: MADIUS COMICS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Papercuts & Inkstains returns with its fifth issue, seeing the team of Mike Sambrook and Rob Jones on writing duties for all three stories this time round. For the first, Immersive Gaming Experience, they're joined by artist Bob Turner, who also provides the glorious cover, inspired by computer games of

old. This first story pushes tongue firmly through cheek, is unashamedly unsubtle while being satirical, and huge fun, riding a wave of nostalgia and finishing with a modern twist.

Artist Paul Moore joins them for the next story, the second instalment of the Vampire Wonderland series. It's an absolute gem of a tale, proof that the team are as good at drama as they are at humour, building the world and the story nicely. It's action-packed too, and the art is stunning, the black and white creating a wonderfully grimy atmosphere. This series has massive potential; if it continues like this, future instalments could find it being mentioned in the same breath as The Walking Dead. Seriously, it's that good. We're promised more and, quite frankly, the wait is going to be intolerable.

Profits of Doom is as ridiculous as ever, but that's certainly not a bad thing. Our inept heroes still crack wise, despite the apocalypse occurring around them, and there are moments of humour that are completely inappropriate for this type of story, but work remarkably well. Anyone who's read this will know exactly what to expect, and won't be disappointed; artist Mike Smith gets better with each issue, and here he includes a final jaw-dropping money shot of a final page that's like a Lovecraftian nightmare. Again, this is a series suited for black and white, but we

can't help but wonder how stunning it would be in colour.

The Madius offerings this year so far have proved they're growing into a force to be reckoned with. The high quality of storytelling we've come to expect has been maintained, while the humour that makes this magazine so memorable has never been sacrificed or compromised. The teams are true to themselves by telling the tales they want to tell and are doing so with great skill; mountains were climbed last year, but judging by this offering the stars are certainly within reach.

ALISTER DAVISON

★★★★★★★ 9





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ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY
ROUND UP FROM
THE WORLD OF ANIME
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Justin Lin Tapped For Warner Bros' AKIRA, as BLADE RUNNER-Style Concepts Surface

As the third **Trek** film in the Abramsverse cleans up at the box office, director Justin Lin is reportedly in talks with Warner Bros about helming the live-action **Akira**. Around the same time as this news broke, some stunning concepts from the film's early days in development hell surfaced online. **The Last Days on Mars** director Ruairi Robinson imagined **Captain America**'s Chris Evans as Kaneda and Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Tetsuo (renamed 'Travis'), with Charlie Wen's art framing Neo-Manhattan as a **Blade Runner**-esque cityscape of rain-slicked steel and concrete.

HUNTER X HUNTER Manga Back on Indefinite Hiatus

Even as Blue Exorcist fans rejoiced with the announcement of a new anime series, **Weekly Shonen Jump** revealed that **Hunter x Hunter** is back on indefinite hiatus... again. Yoshihiro Togashi's manga returned from its previous two-year hiatus in April, after what began in August 2014 as a short break due to his lower back pain. **Jump** staff are set to announce a new resumption date after it's been decided, and we wish Togashi the best of health in the meantime.

Octogenarian Victorious in Light Novel Competition's First Round

Dreams should have no sell-by date, and 81-year-old light novel author Takeharu Otsuki stands as proof. He's made it past the preliminary selection stage for the MF Bunko J Light Novel Rookie of the Year Awards with his entry **Neko ga Mita** (**The Cat Saw It**). While we'd love to see him go on and win, he's up against some stiff competition, with 488 other entrants vying for the opportunity to be published under **Re:ZERO** and **No Game No Life**'s MF Bunko J label.

End in Sight (Sort of) for Eiichiro Oda's ONE PIECE Manga

With 19 years under its belt, you would imagine that a comment from author Eiichiro Oda on **One Piece**'s progression would herald the end. But in July, he pegged the manga at 65% complete at its current point. So it could take another 13 years for us to see if Luffy becomes King of the Pirates, and by then, the manga would have been running in **Shonen Jump** for 32 years. It's enough to make anyone feel old just working out what age they'd be by then, never mind Oda after slogging away all that time.

ELFEN LIED Author Keeps Mobile Phones Out of Manga to Preserve Readers' Immersion

Lynn Okamoto recently explained why you will never see mobile phones in any of his manga. To make his work timeless for all readers, he actively avoids drawing objects that will date his work for future generations. Okamoto took this lesson from reading Mitsuru Adachi's **Miyuki**, a manga that was one of his favourites growing up in the '80s. A bank note that was no longer printed by the time Okamoto was reading appeared in a frame, causing him to lose his sense of immersion in the story.

FAMILIAR OF ZERO's Final Novel to be Released in 2017

Before his passing in 2013, **Familiar of Zero** scribe Noboru Yamaguchi entrusted the legacy of the light novels' ending to his publishers MF Bunko. With the series left two volumes short of its intended 22, the publishers decided to share the plots Yamaguchi had left with a different writer. The surrogate author's identity still a secret, the 21st volume was released in Japan on February 25th, 2016. Now, the 22nd and final volume has been scheduled for February 24th, 2017.





A MONTHLY
FOCUS ON
THE COSTUMED
ROLE-PLAY SCENE AT
FAN CONVENTIONS
AROUND THE WORLD

COSPLAY CATWALK



Credit: Dan W

TALL AND CLOAKY

We hear from Scott Goodman, who has made a name for himself dressing as the Third Doctor...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying?

Scott Goodman: I've been costuming since 2013; I thought after I attended the Longleat big celebration for the 20th anniversary (yes, I am that old, and no I don't know any better!) that I should really do something for the 50th anniversary, so I decided to dress as my favourite Doctor, Jon Pertwee... and here I am still doing it! Originally, I was only going to do it for the anniversary year but I got involved with a couple of charity fundraising costume groups and I'm still doing it and loving every second of it. You know you're never too old for this much fun.

I would recommend anyone, whatever age, to go and give it a shot, and I'm 48, just goes to show you aren't too old!

What is your favourite character to dress as?
There's only one and that's the great Jon

Pertwee, although I do Jaws from the James Bond films *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker* sometimes (being six-foot-seven has its uses). Mainly I'm out and about as the tall and cloaky one, but I am working on a cyber-controller costume from *The Tomb Of The Cybermen* (this time I'm actually attempting to make the suit myself, this will be an interesting learning curve, I bet!). I did have the pleasure of meeting Jon's son Sean at a convention, he looked at me and said "Hello, Dad". I'll take that and run with it - just like his father, he is a gentleman.

I'm usually known by my friends as 'Tall and Cloaky' or 'Cloaky', which came about from a friend's mother, the conversation went something like this as my friend told me:

J - "You met Scott, then?"

Mum - "Yes, he's rather tall and cloaky."

It's stuck ever since and I will admit I am rather fond of it.



Credit: James Kitto

STARBURST

COSPLAY



Credit: Dan W

How long do you normally spend making the costumes?

Now here's the interesting thing: I don't actually make my costumes, I have them made to measure for me. I did try and source original smoking jackets but to no avail. Several vintage clothes shops I contacted said that it's very rare a jacket in my great size comes up, so I had to resort to having them made by some very talented seamstresses (I'm lucky finding them, I will say they took ages to find) and actual Inverness cape coats cost a ruddy arm and a leg, that's the problem with being extra tall, off the peg isn't always an option. I have noticed that a lot of people complain about 'screen accurate'; whether it is or isn't, well UTTER BUMKEN to that one! I personally prefer the phrase 'screen adequate' coined by my good friend Simon Baker (a fantastic Second Doctor costumer and a great foil at events when the Second and Third Doctors start bickering).

MARTIN UNSWORTH

Connect with Scott by heading over to [facebook.com/CloakyThe3rd](https://www.facebook.com/CloakyThe3rd).



Credit: Nath Smith

READER'S COSPLAY "NIGHTINGALE"



STARBURST profiles Emily, another enthusiastic costumer...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying?

Nightingale: I have been cosplaying just shy of two years; May 10th is my cosplay anniversary, where I cosplayed first as Rin Kagamine at Bristol Comic Expo. I had attended cons before this in 'costume', but I don't tend to class my Pikachu onesie as a cosplay!

What is your favourite character to dress as?

So far, I've only done four different characters so I have a special connection to each of them and it's hard to me to pick a favourite. Rin Kagamine (Default, Ball Gown and Sing and Smile versions) are special as she was my first ever cosplay and has become my most well-known. I have also started performing dance skits as her at MCM events and smaller conventions such as J-Con. Spyro the Dragon was the first cosplay I ever attempted to make entirely solo; although a part of the dress had to be redone by my mom as I had never done that sewing technique before and I messed it up. Aside from that, everything from the design to finding the sewing pattern to painting the shoes was all done by myself and I gained a huge boost in my self-confidence after doing so. My *World of Warcraft* Frost Sabre and Misa Anane from *Death Note* can go hand-in-hand as they were the first two cosplays I teamed up with my boyfriend to do; *World of Warcraft* Night Elf was his first ever cosplay. Cosplaying with him really changed the way I want to design future costumes of my own as he has really changed the way I look at myself and has improved my body confidence. He has also convinced me to try and get a very... interesting shoot as Misa to help further with this.

As for future cosplays, I think that my upcoming cosplay as Aerith from *Final Fantasy VII* will be very special to

me as there is an evil, heartbreaking plan involved with it to make it a little different to other cosplays and to also celebrate *FFVII*'s upcoming re-release.

How long do you normally spend making the costumes?

The time I spend on my costumes is different every time depending on when I hear about the con/when I decide on the cosplay/when I can afford to start making it. Rin, for example, was sewn by my mom in just over a month as she wanted to get into sewing and the shorts were bought, which I later swapped out for a pair I had made once I had learnt to sew for myself. Spyro, on the other hand, was designed in September 2014 just after J-Con 7 with the intention to have it finished by the same time next year for that con. However, after something personal happened in my family, I spent that Christmas sewing Spyro's dress together and working on the shoes. Making-wise, Spyro took about four months in total, also including my A-level studies at the time and working on things such as painting shoes and making wings.

The complexity of the design definitely changes how long I spend on one particular costume. My Sing and Smile Rin Kagamine cosplay was made in three days following an illness two weeks before the con happened, so I didn't have much time to make it. Different costumes take different timescales and that's why I often prefer to plan my con schedule for the upcoming year in advance so I know how long I can have to make each one.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

Connect with Emily at [facebook.com/115umbreoncosplay](https://www.facebook.com/115umbreoncosplay)



Credit: John Parker Photography

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PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



POKÉMON GO PLUS Delayed

Pokémon Go fever has swept the world over the course of the last month and millions of people are now trying to track the little beasts on their smartphones. If nothing else, it has been getting people out and about, even if some have stumbled onto dead bodies or decided that walking off cliffs is a good idea.

The **Pokémon Go Plus**, which is essentially a wristwatch that vibrates whenever a PokéStop is near and flashes when there is a Pokémon around so that you don't have to keep the game open all of the time, would likely have solved a few of these problems. However, it has been announced that the release of the device will now be delayed until September.

It was originally intended for release in July, which would have pretty much brought it out in line with the game, but the delay means that people are going to have to keep carrying portable chargers and watching where they are going, at least for the time being.

COMING SOON



GEARS OF WAR 4

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PC

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 11TH

The fourth game in the *Gears of War* trilogy (wait... what?) is very nearly upon us and it promises to be as impactful as the first three games, if not as original. The game takes place 25 years after the events that were covered in the previous games and features the son of Marcus Fenix, because originality is apparently a sin and who needs interesting characters when you have guys whose biceps are bigger than most people? Early word is that the game will play in much the same way as the Xbox 360 titles too, so this looks like more of the same, which should work out fine for fans of the series.

COMING SOON



PAPER MARIO: COLOUR SPLASH

PLATFORM: WII U

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 7TH

Despite the NX creeping ever-closer to an official release, Nintendo are still providing some level of support for the Wii U, though in the case of *Paper Mario: Colour Splash* this may not be a good thing. Fans of the original games in the *Paper Mario* series have already demonstrated their dismay with the idea that the series is moving further away from its RPG roots and it isn't certain if *Colour Splash* is going to be able to bring them back on board.

Is the NX Going to be Portable?

Unfortunately, given Nintendo's craptacular job of telling anybody anything about their upcoming console, all we think we might know about the NX so far is based on rumour and reports from those ever-reliable 'sources'.

One such report doing the rounds claims that the console is portable, makes use of detachable controllers and, most confusingly of all, is going to use cartridges. While the first two items aren't all that surprising, given that Nintendo keep trying to push the envelope and add things into their consoles that people don't really want, the latter is mindboggling.

Unless the company has come up with some spectacular new technology that allows for higher levels of storage on carts and, more importantly, easy development onto them, this really seems like a bad move on the part of Nintendo. Still, none of this is confirmed yet, which is probably why so few people seem to care about the fact that Nintendo, historically one of the greatest developers and console manufacturers of all time, has a new console coming out.

Telltale's BATMAN Game to be Multiplayer

Adventure games have never been the place to go if you want to play with friends, but it seems like Telltale is trying to change all of that, starting with the upcoming **Batman** game that the company is currently developing, the first episode of which is out now.

The studio is going to implement a new feature called 'Crowd Play' that allows other people to join in your decision-making process, which seems like a strange choice given that much of the fun of more recent Telltale titles came from making decisions for yourself and seeing what ramifications they had.

Head of Creative Communications at Telltale, Job Stauffer, said: "We wanted a better way to integrate that audience. Now, from two to 2,000-plus people can help the player make decisions. We are now turning all of Telltale's games into a live interactive multiplayer experience." - though a later statement downsized that player cap from 2000 to 12.

It will be interesting to see if this change is actually wanted by the company's fan base. For us, it seems like Telltale could be doing more to update its creaking game engine, rather than trying to make traditionally single-player experiences more social.

COMING SOON



CIVILIZATION VI PLATFORM: PC, LINUX, MAC RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21ST

After a long wait, the Civilization series is finally back to swallow days of our time once again. Anybody who has played a Civ game before will know what to expect here, though there have been a number of refinements made to technology trees and the governmental diplomacy aspects of the game. The concept of 'city unstacking' is also going to be introduced, which adds an extra layer of strategy to your building efforts. In all, it is really a title that cannot be missed by fans of the genre.

COMING SOON



RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 11TH

The exclusivity deal behind Rise of the Tomb Raider is finally expiring, which means the game is soon going to make its way to the PS4. The series has been revitalised since it started getting a little more Uncharted in its execution and Rise is amongst the best that have been released in one of gaming's most enduring series yet. The game makes more use of stealth and sneaking elements than previous Tomb Raider titles, so you will likely have to change the way you play to find success.

No More Xbox Exclusives

In a rather strange turn of events, it appears that the days of the Xbox exclusive are soon going to become a thing of the past. Before you get too excited, this doesn't mean that we are going to start seeing the likes of **Halo** and **Gears of War** on Sony consoles; however, any game that would have been exclusive to the Xbox will now also find its way onto the PC sooner or later.

Corporate Vice President Yusuf Mehdi wrote in a recent announcement that: "Every new title published from Microsoft Studios will support Xbox Play Anywhere and will be easily accessible in the Windows Store."

Now, this doesn't cover third-party developers, so if a game is released by Activision or whoever exclusively on the console, it will likely stay exclusive. However, in an age where console exclusives from third party developers are becoming increasingly rare, it really is something of a shock to see Microsoft giving people fewer reasons to buy their console.

DEAD RISING 1 and 2 Coming to PS4

While Microsoft were able to announce **Dead Rising 4** as a timed exclusive at E3 2016, it seems like PlayStation fans won't be missing out on a thing, as long as they are willing to wait a little while. In addition to eventually getting **Dead Rising 4**, the console is also going to play host to re-released versions of **Dead Rising 1** and **2**.

There is little word on what, if anything, Capcom will be doing with the two games to bring them up to the current generation's speed and it should also be noted that both games are also going to be released on Xbox One as well. Simply put, **Dead Rising** fans can rejoice in the fact that they will be able to engage in plenty of zombie-smashing mayhem sooner or later, regardless of which console they own.

Two New SONIC Games Announced

We reported last month on SEGA claiming that they had a pair of **Sonic** games in the works to commemorate the series' 25th anniversary and now we finally have a few more details on what the company has in store for us.

Sonic Mania is the most interesting of the pair, as it brings Sonic back to his 2D roots once again, only this time the game will feature reimagined levels from the likes of the Mega Drive Sonic games and Sonic CD. New acts and bosses are to be expected, so this is no mere remake by any stretch of the imagination.

The second game has been codenamed '**Project Sonic 2017**' and will be made by the team behind Colours and Generations, which should hopefully mean that quality is assured.

Speaking about Sonic Mania, Head of Sonic Team Takashi Iizuka stated: "**Sonic Mania** was born out of our fans' love of the classic Sonic 2D platform games. This type of collaboration is a first for SEGA and we hope everyone will be both surprised and delighted by this title. **Sonic Mania** has been a passion project for the entire team and we look forward to sharing more details about it later this year. Having the game actually playable at the event itself was testament to the dedication of the team behind it."

It's probably a little early to get too excited just yet, especially given Sonic's recent sketchy track record, but we can't help but feel like **Mania** in particular is something that is really going to appeal to those fans who still long for the days when the series always hit the mark. It should make for an excellent quarter-century tribute to the series.



Mini NES Announced

Is it a bad thing for Nintendo that more people seem to be excited about a miniature version of a console that they launched more than thirty years ago than they are about the NX? That certainly seems to be the case if the online joy that was expressed upon the announcement of the Mini NES is anything to go by.

So what do we know about the console so far? Well, the little console that could is going to be released for \$60.00 in the United States, which likely means we will see an equivalent sterling price when it comes to the UK because exchange rates mean nothing to Nintendo. Better yet, it will come with one controller and an astonishing thirty games, all of which are built into the console. Of course, you will get your hands on the classic **Mario**, **Zelda**, and **Metroid** games that Nintendo built its early reputation on, but it's also nice to see the likes of **Kid Icarus** getting some shine, too.

Unfortunately, it's not all great news. Nintendo has confirmed that the console will be a standalone device, which means you won't be able to connect any external storage units to it or purchase additional games beyond the thirty that are included. Furthermore, you won't be able to load old NES carts into the system, so don't go throwing away your old console just yet.

Still, for the money this is an excellent deal and you will be getting some of the greatest games ever made. Interestingly, the company has refused to comment on whether similar devices will be coming for the SNES and N64, which suggests that there may just be something in the pipeline.

COMING SOON



NIOH

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28TH

Given the enormous success of the *Souls* series of games, it was only a matter of time before a few imitators would come along to try and steal the crown. *Nioh* is one such imitator, but it looks like it's shaping up to be a fine game in its own right. Repeated deaths are likely going to be a common feature and the intricate swordplay that makes up the core of the game is sure to present a challenge. Interestingly, the game was initially announced way back in 2004, though it has undergone pretty huge changes since then.

COMING SOON



THE LAST GUARDIAN

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28TH

Finally. After so many years of waiting, The Last Guardian is just over the horizon and it promises to become the most spectacular game that Team Ico have ever produced. The game is going to make use of many of the gameplay tropes that Team Ico are known for. Expect the focus on the relationship between 'The Boy' and 'Trico' to be what draws players in. It would be nice for Team Ico, or genDESIGN, which is essentially the same people under a different banner, to see some commercial success from this one.

The SYSTEM SHOCK Remaster Is Coming

Gamers of a certain age will recognise the **System Shock** games as a precursor to the **BioShock** series, with the second in particular still being considered as one of the best games of all time. There are even those who dislike **BioShock** because they feel the series is too much of a departure from the roots laid down by **System Shock**.

Those people need lament progress no longer, as a recent Kickstarter created by Night Dive Studios has hit its \$900,000 goal, which means that we will be getting a **System Shock** remaster at some point in the future. For the time being, it seems like the game will be exclusive to PC and Xbox One, so PS4 gamers are going to have to miss out, though we imagine this might change if the title experiences success.

Night Dive has already been responsible for a number of re-releases, including that of **System Shock 2** on gog.com, but this remaster is likely the most ambitious project that the company has handled to date. Let's hope they don't disappoint.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



FALLOUT 1.5: RESURRECTION

DEVELOPER: RESURRECTION TEAM / PUBLISHER: RESURRECTION TEAM / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Every fandom has its little divides. From Doctor Who fanatics favouring the current era over the classic to Star Wars fans who deride everything besides the original trilogy, there is always natural split which arises over time. But, few ever become so pronounced as those of the Fallout franchise with its older and newer generation. There remains sadly little crossover between lovers of the old and new games, and in the minds of many you either love Bethesda's work or you stand adamantly by Black Isle Studios' legacy. It goes without saying that the latter group has had very little fortune in the past few years, with few to no releases truly capturing the depth or style of the old '90s duology. At least until now.

Made by a group of devoted fans in the Czech Republic, 1.5 has been made to bridge the gap between the first two games. Set some years before the rise of the Chosen One, it avoids a lot of the usual factions such as the Super Mutants, Enclave and Brotherhood in favour of newer, broader ideas of an untamed wasteland. As a result, the world is truly alien, and this is captured perfectly thanks to the protagonist's mysterious origin – awakening in a cave with little more than the Vault suit on his back, his name and a mysterious talisman clutched in his hand.

The story is vastly better staged and developed than many later sequels,

lacking the overly civilised issues of New Vegas, the massive plot holes of Fallout 3 or the lack of real desperation found in 4. Instead the group aimed to recapture the more harrowing edge of the original game, ditching many of the more expectedly goofier elements. While there are still gags to be found in here, both this and the removal of so many familiar factions makes the world feel far more alive, far more alien and much more deadly as a result.

The missions themselves are a surprisingly diverse mix of tasks despite resorting to the usual skill-based challenges or random acts of murder. Ranging from the expected salvage tasks to some extremely unsavoury work for criminals, you can never quite predict how a quest will turn out, or what results will stem from your actions. You can even end up being quite badly bitten in the rear should you just focus upon the objectives ahead of you without any thought or preparation; resulting in you either overlooking vital info or subtle hints allowing you to drastically change the outcome of your task.

The actual combat system itself is Fallout through and through. Save for better AI and a few less glitches, it sticks to its guns. The interface is still as detailed, if a little obtuse, as the classic games and there is less of an emphasis upon rapid gunplay than on a carefully stocked inventory. As such, it

rewards tactics, planning and the ability to quickly adapt to your foes, but lacks the risk of your companions trying to shoot at a foe through you.

Resurrection's chief problem more than anything else is that the game can seem a little limited at times. While certainly a monumental success given the lack of any major backing, the world is undeniably smaller and much easier to navigate than the old series. What's more, the English translation is sadly a little stilted at points, a problem which can diminish the otherwise fantastically dark atmosphere: and a few major story elements lack the depth or detailed explanations Fallout otherwise benefitted from.

Still, even accounting for those few shortcomings, Fallout 1.5: Resurrection is easily the best true sequel this franchise has seen in decades. Recapturing the sense of desperation, exploring unknown wastes and a world gone mad lost since the original instalment, you would be truly insane to skip this one. Fallout fans, post-apocalyptic enthusiasts and anyone with a spare copy of Fallout 2 from an old Steam sale, download this at the earliest opportunity.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



I AM SETSUNA

DEVELOPER: TOKYO RPG FACTORY / PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX /
PLATFORM: PC, PS4, PS VITA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Nostalgia is a very easy thing to mine. Throw in the right characters and promote something in the right way, and you can get a big, broad audience to pay attention to you. However, actually satisfying that ++experience are woefully poor, to say the least. I am Setsuna thankfully proves to be the exception.

The world here isn't

merely one where "winter is coming" but it's already arrived in force. It's your job to survive and hopefully restore it. Saying more would sadly spoil the game, as it does love its RPG clichés, but the real meat stems from what is worked around this. The characters are entertaining and the locations memorable, and it seems as

if the core plot was largely an excuse to experiment with a few fun ideas.

The real selling point here is the Active Time Battle combat, which is more akin to an older Star Ocean or Chrono Trigger release than the typical turn-based affair. Offering the use of movement, flanking, formations and tactical mobility, it's a welcome change for sure, especially when paired up with the new Momentum mechanic. Requiring timing over slow tactics, it allows a second bar to slowly build up as you fight. Lose something when momentum is high and you can be granted some bonuses to your abilities, from bonus damage to fireballs or a HP replenishing spell also curing all status ailments. It's a small bonus of originality which helps to keep things fresh.

I am Setsuna's main failings relate to two key issues. The first of these is the dialogue, as while the story is well told, there are some extraordinarily cringeworthy moments throughout the story.

Characters will spew clichéd heroic lines which were old ten years ago, and there are a few odd wrinkles in the translation which were never ironed out. The second is the constant backtracking the game requires of the player. This isn't done to make the world seem ever-changing or to create a metroidvania sense of learning, but to pad out the tale with fetch quests. It becomes a real drag on the story, robbing it of a much-needed tighter narrative.

Aiming for the "warts and all" approach, I am Setsuna retains the best and worst traits of this genre's old titles. It certainly nails the old sense of wonder, but you may find yourself frustrated at its more obtuse moments. Still, with Final Fantasy having "revolutionised" itself beyond recognition, perhaps a reminder of what made them great was what Square Enix truly needed.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

★★★★★★★★★ 6



GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX - FIRST ASSAULT ONLINE

DEVELOPER: NEOPLE / PUBLISHER: NEXON / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's bizarre we've not seen more games from this franchise. Really, when you think about it, Ghost in the Shell is a long-standing series ripe for countless video game adaptations. You have guns, you have mechas, science fiction elements and even philosophical insanity capable of rivaling Metal Gear; all of which is not even counting the police procedural or detective elements. Unfortunately for us, however, First Assault Online isn't quite the smash hit we

were hoping for.

As you might guess from the name, the game focuses less upon deep or detailed storytelling than it does online mass multiplayer experiences. You play as members of Section 9 - the elite cyborg SWAT equivalent - and shoot guns at people. While certainly basic, the game's charm stems from the elements taken from the Ghost in the Shell franchise. Many recognizable guns, items and characters all show up

looking as if they have stepped right out of the anime. The Tachikoma Tanks in particular stand out extremely well in all their machine-gunning glory, and the cyberpunk concepts add a great new element. Unfortunately, all these positive aspects are only skin deep, and it doesn't take long to notice First Assault Online's deep-rooted flaws.

Despite being a free to play model, the actual monetary scheme itself is borderline insane. The purchase bundles are enough to make Gaijin look conservative and overall offer nowhere near enough benefit to justify costs of up to £67.99. Worse still, the game seems as if it were built to force people to buy into these, as daily tasks do nothing to ease out the daily grind, and costs keep increasing across the board. A recent patch alone tripled the purchase price of more expensive weapons, and the XP rewards for your efforts are almost non-existent. By the time you hit level twenty - of the eighty levels in total - you will be beating your head against a brick wall.

Even discounting their schemes, the core gameplay is copy beyond belief. Besides a

netcode which seems to have been cobbled together out of spare parts, the hit-boxes of characters are inaccurate at the best of times, and desynch once you look down a scope. The scopes themselves just happen to be poorly aligned, and even weapons stats seem to be meaningless trappings at best. Cap this off with a near non-existent balance between weapons, meaning SMGs are the only weapon worth using, and you're left with an inept and poorly conceived product from an otherwise fantastic franchise.

While we rarely cover open beta games in this magazine, the developer's decision to front-load a storefront and lack of any progress after a year of work justifies this review. Short of divine intervention, there is little here which could truly fix First Assault Online's long-standing failings, and it seems to exist only to trick anime fans into wasting their cash. With the likes of Counter-strike: Go and Overwatch on the market, you really have no reason to drop any money on a game this bad.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

★★★★★★★★★ 2



GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL?

A first-hand look at the pros and cons of the mobile game that has become a phenomenon...

Pokémon Go: it's a game that has delighted millions, annoyed plenty and transformed many. Whether it's diehard fans who've loved Pokémon throughout most of their lives or newcomers like this particular writer being properly introduced into the world of Pokémon, the game has been downloaded over 100 million times since its launch in July. For those of you who've been living in a cave for the past few months with your eyes shut and your fingers in your ears, **Pokémon Go** is a free-to-play augmented reality game where the player becomes a Pokémon trainer. The player can locate, capture, battle, and train Pokémon they encounter using the mobile phone's GPS. The Pokémon appear on the screen as if they were in the real world. There has been a lot of praise for the location-based aspects of the game and the fact it massively incentivises the player to get out of the house and walk to hatch eggs. So why is there so much hate for this game?

The most important issue people have raised with **Pokémon Go** is the numerous technical issues. When the server isn't mysteriously crashing, causing the player to be kicked out of the game, it is having memory issues, experiencing signal difficulties in locating the player and, since the last update, Pokémon have become much harder to catch and more likely to run away. The countless technical issues give off the impression that the game isn't complete. It has the feel of a prototype rather than a ready-to-play game. This is a problem the developers Niantic is undoubtedly aware of. Whilst they may have been keen to get the game out to as many countries as they can when everybody was complaining their country haven't had **Pokémon Go** released yet, it may have been worth ensuring that the technical side of things was up to scratch. Sometimes a little delay is worth allowing the problems to be ironed out.

An issue that may concern some is safety. There have been many accusations that Niantic has created a potentially dangerous game that'll cause the player to completely disregard any sort of hazards the outside world provides. There are stories of incredibly careless drivers who decided playing **Pokémon Go** whilst driving

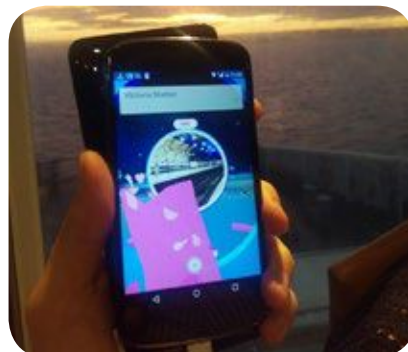
was a good idea until they crashed into something or someone. No doubt you may have heard of various stories of people walking into cars whilst playing, including the story of 15-year-old Autumn Deiseroth from Pittsburgh. She and her mother claim that **Pokémon Go** was responsible for her being hit by a vehicle after being 'forced' to cross a four-lane road intersection twenty miles from Pittsburgh. This created a moral panic of sorts as paranoid Internet users and helicopter parents declared **Pokémon Go** a threat to their children. One may be able to tell from the tone this is being described in that I find placing the blame on **Pokémon Go** for these incidents ludicrous. The game's loading screen and the first pop-up notice deliver warnings that tell the player to be aware of their surroundings and not to trespass onto land to play or play the game whilst driving. What else can the game do to make itself any clearer? Perhaps some personal responsibility should be employed. We're aware some people hate doing that but perhaps if you're not able to take responsibility for yourself, you shouldn't play a game like **Pokémon Go**.

Whilst there have been negative reactions to **Pokémon Go**, there's been a lot of good that's come out of the game. Players with social anxiety issues have reported an increased confidence in venturing outdoors an achievement no other game can lay claim to. New friendships and bonds have been made by people simply bumping into each other, discovering they're on the same team and banding together to take down a PokéGym. It's not just players with previous social issues that have benefitted. Players who may not have done much exercise before have now increased the amount of time they spend walking by an incredible rate. Personally, I'm keener to take extra-long walks home from work just to hatch some eggs or to find more Pokémon to catch. There are many technical issues with **Pokémon Go** that people rightly criticise, but I think that it can be a great thing especially when further issues get sorted out.

JENNIFER DREWITT

POKÉ MISHAPS

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!



While travelling from France to England on the ferry, and opening **Pokémon Go** whilst in the Channel, you might find you're somewhere completely different.

ATTACK OF THE SOFT POKÉMON



There have been a few pictures of Pokémon appearing far bigger than they are in Augmented Reality mode. Here a Jigglypuff looks as if it's disturbing a baseball game.

IT'S A HARD NOT LIFE...



Some unintentional Pokémon positioning in Augmented Reality mode has been pretty harsh. Whilst there have been countless pictures of Magikarp appearing suicidal, the pictures of Exeggcutte with sunny side up eggs in a pan is a bit more brutal and more amusing to see.

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



ROBOT NINJA KITCHEN

It's been a while since we've thrown a few random games together and pretended it's something approaching a coherent 'column', so for old time's sake let's spend the next couple of pages having a look at some bits of nonsense that we've managed to dig up over the last few months...

PANIC RESTAURANT (NES, 1992)

We've featured a lot of ridiculous games on these pages over the last however long these pages have been around for, but this could be the stupidest one so far... An un-named chef (the Internet seems to think he's called Cookie, so let's go with that) is walking down the street minding his own business when, all of a sudden, pieces of fruit start falling on his head. Off-screen, an evil looking chap named Ohdove channels the spirit of Mary Poppins and floats down from the sky on an umbrella, gleefully claiming to have 'taken your nice little restaurant'. Headless cooked chickens chase Cookie to the front door of the restaurant, which we're left to presume has been taken over rather than outright stolen, and then it's up to you to reclaim your property!

Armed with nothing but a simple frying pan, Cookie runs and jumps through six levels, bashing seven shades of sushi out of all manner of culinary-based enemies while en route to the final battle with the stupidly-named Ohdove. Pizzas, sausages, toasters, apples, onions, super-glamorous female carrots, the lot. Each level ends

with a boss fight, of course - these mainly consist of encounters with oversized kitchen appliances, but a particular favourite is the hyperactive oven that spews out the ghosts of dead chickens when it has been defeated...

Cookie's weapons can be upgraded by collecting conveniently-placed power-ups -

the serving spoon has a longer reach than the basic frying pan, but the fork is what you really want as this gives you the ability to bounce up high in the air and stab the living daylight out of all that pesky food on your way down! There's also a huge saucepan that acts as an invincibility power-up, as it wedges itself tightly over Cookie's head and knocks out anything in its path as he spins around in confusion. Throw in a couple of hidden mini-games ('Catch the Fish' and 'Take the Egg') and a fruit machine-style bonus round at the end of each level, there's a deceptively large amount of ideas rattling around inside this old 8-bit cartridge. It's a fairly pricey one to get hold of these days, but we all know how the Internet works...

NINJA COMMANDO (NEO GEO, 1992)

Anyone up for some vertically-scrolling run and gun insanity? You're in luck! *Ninja Commando* is a good old-fashioned romp through seven different time periods, in which a band of three warriors are attempting to foil the evil Mars Corporation's plans to control the future by destroying the past. Yeah, another one of those daft storylines that gives developers an opportunity to fill their game with all sorts of crazy stuff that doesn't make sense! Hooray!

Each of the three playable characters has their own unique attacks and special moves, as well as a hidden 'metamorphosis' move that is triggered by collecting scrolls to gain enough power before inputting a Street Fighter-style controller combo to unleash the fury of the beast within. If you've ever wanted to kill your enemies with an unstoppable flock of eagles, or wipe out all the bad guys with a tiger that shoots laser beams, this is totally the game for you. The phrase 'hidden



gem' is getting a bit overused these days, but with a nicely challenging difficulty level, awesome cartoony graphics, a colourful cast of characters and a fantastic array of backdrops, plus those over the top special moves, this really is worth the time and effort it might take to get hold of a copy.

Neo Geo games were few and far between even when they were on general release, so finding an original cartridge might be a bit of a pain. It's currently available on Nintendo's Virtual Console, but you'll need to find your way into the US store if you live outside of North America. Hey SNK/ Nintendo! Make *Ninja Commando* available for everyone! It's one of the greatest games that nobody's ever heard of!

METAL STORM (NES, 1991)

The idea was to visit a few different consoles in this issue, but seeing as we've recently played it and it's worthy of a quick mention in the little bit of space we've got left, here's *Metal Storm* from Tamtex, the people behind the wonderful *Hammerin' Harry: Ghost Building Adventure* on the Game Boy and very little else of note.

Set in 2051, and some sort of defence outpost on Pluto has malfunctioned and is set to wipe out the entire solar system. As the pilot of the M-308 Gunner, your job is to infiltrate the base and deactivate the lasers before Earth is melted into oblivion. What a palaver! The M-308 is fitted with a gravity control device, which gives players a superbly utilised mechanic that really sets this game apart from many other action platformers. The terrain must be negotiated from both above and below, leading to some frantic moments as you flip between the floor and ceiling while blasting away at enemies and winding your way around the many obstacles around the game's six two-part levels. There are the usual power-ups and shield boosters to collect, before reaching a 'boss rush' level at the end of the game where every big bad guy needs to be defeated one more time to coax the final supervillain out of his hiding place.

It might not sound like much, but as an overall package *Metal Storm* is easily one of the most fun retro games we've come across in a long time. Highly recommended!



RETRO FIGHTS: TOMMY END



Hailing from the Netherlands, Tommy End has built up a reputation as one of the most hard-hitting strikers in Europe over the last few years with a wrestling style heavily influenced by his extensive kickboxing/MMA background. If recent reports are to be believed, 'The Anti-Hero' may well be heading off to the other side of the Atlantic in the near future, which is something us folk here at Retro Bytes/Fights are tremendously excited about! We were lucky enough to catch Tommy in a rare break from kicking people in the head/chest/back/legs to have a quick chat about what he gets up to in his spare time...

STARBURST: What are your earliest gaming memories?

Tommy End: My earliest ones have to be Nintendo, and Sega Master System. *Wonderboy III: The Dragon's Trap*, *Super Mario Land 1* to 3, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and *Mortal Kombat 1* to 3...

What consoles have you owned previously?

I own a PS1 to 4, and had a Sega Master System when I was younger. First generation Game Boy as well.



STARBURST

Are there any games or consoles you really wanted in your younger days but didn't have?

I wanted everything! We grew up not having a lot of money so I played video games at my friends' houses who had every system you could want, ha-ha! I played most of the games I wanted to have, and most of them were great. I felt that as a kid games like *Golden Axe III* really helped with the fantasy stuff I was into.

What's the main appeal of retro gaming?

It's a nice place full of good memories when playing them, and they are still as tricky as they were when I was a kid.

What are your all-time favourite games?

The *Onimusha* series, *Nightmare Creatures 1*, the *Tenchu* series, *Shinobidu*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Doom 2*, *Wolfenstein*, *Wonderboy III: The Dragon's Trap*, the *Double Dragon* series, *Medal of Honor 1*, *Bubble Bobble*, *Super Mario Bros 3*, *Mortal Kombat II*, *Skyrim*, *Fallout New Vegas*, *Bushido Blade 1* and 2 (so sick!)... I'm pretty sure there are more, but this is from the top of my head what I can come up with.

Any favourite/proudest gaming moments?

Completing *Skyrim* and all side quests and faction quests and DLC was a pretty good feeling, and at the same time sad because I wasn't done playing, if you know what I mean.

New games vs. old games - which is better?

Tough question, I like both for very different reasons. I'm a huge fan of the evolution of gaming, but some games are just too hard nowadays. Games like *Bloodborne* or *Dark Souls* are beyond my capability and level of patience.

If you could wrestle any character from gaming history, who would you choose and why?

Wario, he was such a great villain!

Anything else you want to add/discuss?

Neh, just follow me on Twitter and Instagram! @tommyend





WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY

Living Long and Prospering

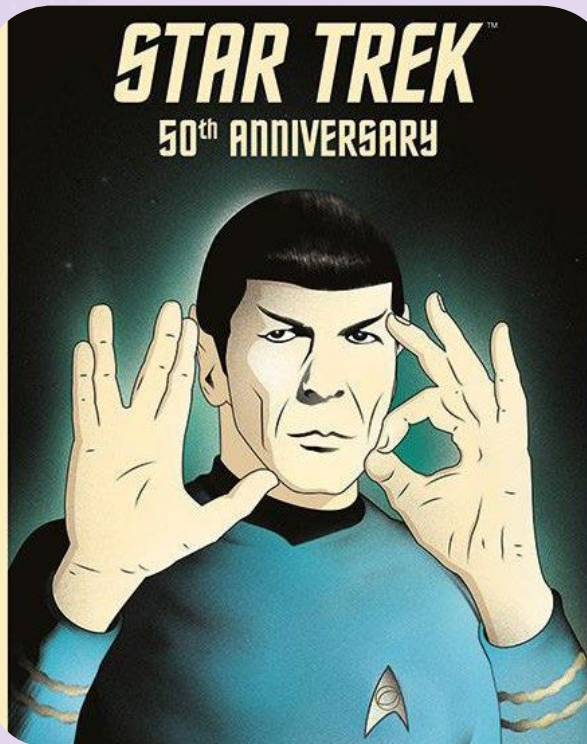
As you may already know, unless this section is the first you read (in which case aww shucks, thank you), a certain space-based franchise is celebrating 50 years of phasers, aliens, ground-breaking developments, and impeccably fetching outfits. In five decades, Gene Roddenberry's brainchild has hugely altered pop culture, so in assembling the emporium this month, we pay extra attention to any items of momentous or celebratory **Trek** merch. First off, our friends over at beltsbucklestees.com have a very nice U.S.S. Enterprise shirt, celebrating the ship that has been blown up more times than an effigy of Guy Fawkes.

And then we came across some anniversary gear, starting with this Starfleet badge from zavvi.com. Simple but effective in design, with very classy gold colour, this badge will let everyone know that you not only follow Trek, you love it! Finally, there is this brilliant poster from emp-online.co.uk, which is a fan design of the late, great Leonard Nimoy as Mr Spock (obviously). And better yet, he is using his Vulcan hand gestures to spell out the numbers [can you spell out numbers? – Ed] '5' and '0'. Happy Birthday **Star Trek**!

STAR TREK U.S.S. ENTERPRISE SHIRT - £7
AVAILABLE FROM BELTSBUCKLESTEEES.COM

**QUANTUM MECHANIX STAR TREK 50TH ANNIVERSARY
MAGNETIC STARFLEET BADGE - £17.99**
AVAILABLE FROM ZAVVI.COM

STAR TREK 50TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER - £4.99
AVAILABLE FROM EMP-ONLINE.CO.UK



Stop This Madness... For the Love of Pete

As the pages of this very issue went to press, David Ayer's **Suicide Squad** either hit it out of the park or was shot down. Either way, it will be a-swinging. Speaking of swinging, **forbiddenplanet.com** has an official Harley Quinn baseball bat for pre-order, which is decorated with the words 'Good Night' - what a nice sentiment as you get bashed in the face (not that we're recommending such things). Also out this month, and at quite the opposite end of the spectrum, is the rather surprisingly good (see our review on page 77) remake of **Pete's Dragon**, and over on **Etsy.com** we found this bracelet by KKandWhimsy, modeled on the original film! Very charming.

SUICIDE SQUAD HARLEY SWAT BASEBALL BAT - £39.99
(PRE-ORDER: EXPECTED RELEASE 4TH SEPTEMBER)
AVAILABLE FROM **FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK**

PETE'S DRAGON BRACELET - £19.53
AVAILABLE FROM **ETSY.COM**



Out-Trump Your Retro Mates

Those fine folk at **Gods and Monsters** have come up - well - trumps again with this new set of **Mondo VHS** playing cards. With a cult spin on the classic game, these **Lurid Trumps** are sure to bring tears of nostalgia to those old enough to remember the halcyon days of the video rentals. Limited to only 200 sets, these are destined to be collector's items, just like the **Video Nasty** sets are.

LURID TRUMPS: MONDO VHS - £15
AVAILABLE FROM
GODSANDMONSTERSRECORDS.COM



Stormborn Data Storage

With **Game of Thrones** now not returning until later in 2017, we're left pining for more, so while we wait, why not get your files in order with this cute little USB stick in the shape of the Mother of Dragons herself, Daenerys Targaryen? It's just one of the range available at the official **HBO Store**.

DAENERYS TARGARYEN 16GB USB FLASH DRIVE - £15.99
AVAILABLE FROM **HBOSHOPEU.COM**



Happy Birthday Basil!

Aside from Star Trek's 50th birthday, this year also marks the anniversary of a lesser-known but vastly underrated Disney Animated Classic. Yes, **The Great Mouse Detective** turns thirty this year and this colourful and pleasant shirt by TopNotchy from **teepublic.com** tips its deerstalker to the rodent detective, with a nice little mix of the 1986 animated classic and modern day TV's **Sherlock**.

SHERLOCK THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE - \$20 USD
AVAILABLE FROM **TEEPUBLIC.COM**





WORDS & PHOTOS: KIERON MOORE

MCM COMIC CON MANCHESTER

Manchester Central,
Windmill St,
Manchester M2 3GX
30-31st July 2016

Now in its sixth year, Manchester's biggest comic con returned to the city's convention centre over the final weekend of July. Thankfully, this came after the recent heatwave had subsided, and the weather had returned to being more typically northern, and so those waiting in the long entry queue didn't get too sweaty inside their Pikachu costumes and Stormtrooper armour.

As always at MCM events, the range of cosplay on show was the highlight. The most popular looks this year included Harley Quinn and Jared Leto's Joker, with several couples coming as the deranged pair from the *Suicide Squad* movie. Other costumes were inspired by *Pokémon*, *Marvel*, *Fallout*, various anime characters, and much more.

The main hall of the convention centre was devoted to a wide variety of stalls, with

everything from *My Little Pony* plushies to *Star Wars*-inspired artwork on sale, and many bargains to be found. There was also a fine selection of comics – yes, at a comic con! – with quite a few indie publishers having their own tables, as well as countless boxes of Marvel and DC classics allowing fans to fill in gaps in their collections. You could easily spend a whole day perusing the wares on offer, and, though the convention did get very busy towards the middle of the day, it was well laid out and never felt uncomfortably cramped.

The con's guests were all in fine spirits, signing autographs and posing for photos with fans. Whovians had the chance to meet the Fifth Doctor, Peter Davison, and Davros himself, Terry Molloy, while *Game of Thrones* aficionados could meet stars Ian Beattie, Ian McElhinney, Ian Gelder, and Roger Ashton-Griffiths (we have to assume that's a stage name and he's really called Ian). It was Warwick Davis, however, who pulled in the biggest queue and seemed genuinely happy to meet his fans – none of this 'no posed photos' nonsense with him! Unfortunately, Craig Charles had to pull out of the show due to an injury, and Chris Barrie had earlier announced his no-show, but their *Red Dwarf* co-star Robert

Llewellyn was on hand to get fans excited for the upcoming new season. Other guests included *The Musketeers* stars Luke Pasqualino, Tamla Kari, and Alexandra Dowling, *Primeval*'s Andrew Lee Potts, who talked about his amazing web series *Wireless* and gave a great interview on the MCM Buzz stage on the Sunday in which he revealed a little about his upcoming thriller *Host*, and *Storage Hunters*' Sean Kelly and Jesse McClure.

There were several other activities on offer to fill up the weekend, including the qualifiers for the EuroCosplay championships, a *Street Fighter* V tournament, and an art competition for the kids.

The *Hello Kitty* section – a fenced-off area where people could go to be transported to the pink-tinged world of the much-loved bow-wearing character (you have to remember that it's actually a little girl, not a cat!) – was another popular draw. Young and old alike wore their Kitty crowns with pride after visiting this attraction.

There certainly seemed to be more to see and experience at this year's event. The seating in the main hall had visibly been reduced, but not to the point of causing a problem for anyone wanting to take time out, or not spill their burgers or other food that they'd queued for half an hour for. In fairness, despite how insanely busy it was, queuing wasn't a major issue this year. With the majority of tickets purchased in advance, and a 'priority entry option' in place, there was very little delay and certainly, by the time the doors had been open for a few hours, the flow through the main entrance was moving very smoothly.

After building itself up over its first few years, this annual event has now settled into Manchester's calendar; it's a slickly run con that gives thousands of cosplayers and bargain hunters alike a great day out and shows that the north's geek scene is standing strong.

Find out more about the regular shows at mcmcomiccon.com.





WORDS & PHOTOS: ED FORTUNE

EDGE-LIT 5
Derby QUAD & Cinema
Market Place, Cathedral Quarter
Derby DE1 3AS
16th July 2016

There are two types of writers in the world. Those who call themselves aspiring writers and those who simply are writers. The difference is that whilst aspiring writers dream of writing, read books about writing and talk about writing, writers simply get on with it and write. Derby's cult book event, Edge-Lit, is where aspiring writers go to die. Because one trip to Edge-Lit will almost certainly inspire you to get on with the important business of actually writing.

The appeal behind Edge-Lit is that it's a place where those who love genre books turn up and gather. It's also an event that's filled with people who are in the business of writing fantasy, sci-fi and horror in some shape or form. Because the venue, the Derby Quad, is not too big and not too small, the result is an event that is perfectly formed.

Edge-Lit has been running for five years



now, and it's pretty much gotten its format set. It's established, in terms of both its positive reputation in the genre literature community and what people expect from it. Held over one day, it's filled with workshops, panels, discussions and an awful lot of people propping up the bar.

This year, the event's guests of honour included M. John Harrison, Emma Newman, and Alastair Reynolds. Harrison is a Clarke Award-winning sci-fi author best known for his book *Nova Swing*. He's also a strong public speaker who isn't afraid to speak his mind. Newman is mostly known for her Young Adult split worlds novels, her dark and engaging sci-fi and the podcast *Tea and Jeopardy*. She brought energy and charm to every panel and talk she was part of. This was balanced by the sardonic and witty Alastair Reynolds, who always has a fresh perspective.

Other guests included members from up and down the industry – everyone from creative powerhouse Paul Cornell to award-winning small press publisher Adele 'Fox Spirit' Wearing was present. The variety and choice at this event is one of its key draws; if you like genre books, this is for you.

Workshops ran throughout the day, and the event's policy of insisting that you can only book a workshop on the day meant that plenty of people arrived first thing. Highlights included a masterclass in short story writing from Alastair Reynolds, a series of exercises and meditations on opening your story by Relic Guild author Ed Cox, and a very useful conversation with Alex Davis on the perils of starting a small press. The schedule had a nice mix of topics, including everything from making your first moves in writing to extra tips and advice. It's always fascinating to see who else goes to these things, and it's heartening to discover that in addition to those looking to get published, there are also some very established authors looking for an extra tip or two.

Another key draw was the various book launches. The UK is blessed with

a thriving and enthusiastic small press and the book launches were pretty much all day long. This is especially interesting as wine and nibbles tend to be available at these things. After all, it's only polite to toast a new book coming out. Mostly this meant that there were readings of exciting new fiction throughout the day. A particular highlight was a NewCon Books and Fox Spirit book launch, which featured a cracking Lovecraft-inspired reading by David Tallerman (*Giant Thief*).

Panels are, of course, an expected part of this sort of event, and they were a bit of a mixed bag this year. The 'Small but Perfectly Formed' panel asked the question 'is the small and indie press producing the best SF?' As it was mostly filled with indie press publishers and authors who have used the small press at some point in their careers, the answer was, strangely enough, yes. Other panels included one about the way that crime stories are creeping into genre fiction. This was mostly an excuse for authors to swap some great tales they had about crime, including the insights of former crime journalist (and now genre writer) Maria Lewis. Very entertaining stuff.

Other interesting events includes the raffle. Typically, raffles at literature events are functional and not terribly interesting affairs, with attendees crowding round to find out if they've won. However, Edge Lit has this tradition; highly successful author Sarah Pinborough and a friend do the whole thing with a huge sense of fun and sarcasm. As most of the prizes tend to be things donated by people who are also in the crowd, this can be quite a fun, if snarky, affair.

Also included was the Super Relaxed Fantasy Club; a way to wind down toward the end of the event, in which authors gave readings and people simply chilled out at the end of a long but fascinating day. If you take books seriously and you love genre, then do be at the next one. We'll see you there.

Keep up with developments for next year's event by following @EdgeLitDerby on Twitter.

PAUL MOUNT'S



with Andrew Pollard

Welcome back to another month of Paul Mount's TV Zone... just not with Mr. Mount himself present. No, instead you've got me once more whilst the legendary Mountie enjoys his hiatus, sunning himself somewhere whilst surrounded by a bevy of beauties who are all plying him with exotic fruits and keeping his pint glass topped up. Something like that, anyway. Luckily, whilst this column's titular host has left little ol' me to fill the void, there's been some fantastic TV shows to keep us all entertained...

Now I know that Mountie will be talking about this show when he returns to the fold, and it is his column so he's more than entitled to call the shots, but it's impossible to do this outing for **TV Zone** without mentioning **Stranger Things**. I'll do my best not to tread on too many toes here by going into too much detail or heading into any sort of spoiler territory, but man - *oh man* - is this Netflix-exclusive show a breath of fresh air. Created by Matt and Ross Duffer, **Stranger Things** is likely to be the TV highlight of the year for many a genre fan by the time 2016 comes to a close. For someone like myself who was born in the early 1980s, **Stranger Things** is the perfect hark back to a time of wonder, where childish innocence, creepy monsters, lashings of sci-fi, and a great sense of adventure were all present and accounted for in our imaginations. Checking out which Kardashian has put what in where on their latest reality show? No thanks. Anxiously awaiting the next series of **X Factor**? Unless that's the X-Men offshoot team, no thank you. Waiting to hear who Katie Price is letting into her chasm of a vagina? Err, not for me, sir. No, give me a dose of classic genre TV any day of the week rather than the pap that seems to invade any and all TV screens on a far too regular basis. And that's exactly what **Stranger Things** is. In its eight-episode first season (a second season is already confirmed, thankfully), the show reminded so many of us just what it means to enjoy a classic, rich, emotive and engaging TV show. No shocks for the sake of shocks, no over-the-top brutality,

no gore, no over-convoluted twists or played-out plot points. Instead, **Stranger Things** gave us something that was genuinely spellbinding and easily worthy of eight hours of anyone's time. The basic premise revolves around a group of young teens searching for their missing friend in an '80s landscape whilst also attempting to make sense of a gifted newcomer and delve deep into what appears to be a mighty, mighty dodgy cover-up mission. It really is hard to do justice to **Stranger Things**, so genuinely wondrous and wonderful is this Netflix newbie. With its

references loud and proud for all to see, there's a feel to the show that reminds us of classics of yesteryear such as **Stand By Me**, **The Lost Boys**, **Batteries Not Included**, **Twin Peaks**, **Eerie, Indiana**, **Poltergeist** and a whole lot more, all doused in a John Carpenter-influenced score and brimming with remarkable performances from its young cast, not to mention serving as a great example of how good Winona Ryder can still be when given something juicy to sink her teeth into. But alas, Mountie will be covering this stunner of a show in more detail in a future episode of **TV Zone**, so I'll leave it there. Simply put, if you've yet to see **Stranger Things**, you're missing out on one of the TV must-sees of the year.

And speaking of must-sees, that brings us nicely to AMC's **Preacher**. Dominic Cooper's Jesse Custer has sailed off into the sunset for now, with the show's first season officially in the bag. Was it exactly what fans of Garth Ennis' famed source material were expecting? Maybe not, but it still made for some fantastic viewing. Only ten episodes in length - and also another show already confirmed for a second season - **Preacher** is yet another example of why there's so much investment and commotion surrounding modern TV lately. **Preacher** gave viewers another show that was rich in storytelling, delicately crafted and always keeping audience's attention for the most part, with some standout performances leading the way (most notably Joe Gilgun's Cassidy and Jackie Earle Haley's Quincannon). If we're being fair and balanced, though, it has to be said that Cooper's Custer maybe took a little while to get going, acting like quite the asshat for large parts of the first season. And equally, the chemistry between Cooper's Preacher and Ruth Negga's often-underused Tulip O'Hare was something else that took a fair while to come to fruition. Still, **Preacher** gave us all something to be hugely excited about, with Point Grey Pictures having put together a series that both paid respect to the source material whilst also becoming its own beast. It's an approach that's



STRANGER THINGS



PREACHER

worked so well for **The Walking Dead**, and it's something that worked like a doozy for **Preacher** – even if the show didn't quite veer off the original track as much as AMC's walker-driven fan favourite show has. What's most exciting about **Preacher** is how things have now all fallen into place for what should hopefully be a mesmerising second season, with the show's debut season having been used to place the pieces ahead of what should be a real rollercoaster of a ride over the next few years.

From one fantastic new show to another fantastic new show to yet another fantastic new show, and that can mean only one thing: **Outcast**. FOX's Patrick Fugit-headlined possession-heavy show has been yet another terrifying breath of devious air for horror hounds out there. Having aired eight episodes of its first season by the time we're going to print (leaving only two episodes of its first season left), **Outcast** has made for some truly disturbing viewing, with so much of this eerie effort delivering a legitimately twisted viewing experience whilst often leaving so much to its audience's imagination and intrigue due to regularly keeping plenty of its truest evil simmering under the surface and ready to strike out at any given moment. And what's so pleasing, once more, here is that this is yet another terrific show that has already been confirmed for a second season, with the hope being that this can be a chilling horror series that will keep audiences gnawing at their fingernails for many a year going forward. In fairness, we've been a little spoilt on the horror front over recent years with shows such as **The Walking Dead**, **Hannibal** and the jaw-dropping **Bates Motel**, but if **Outcast** plays its cards right and handles its first season conclusion well, then we can add another modern-day classic to the list of fearful TV frighteners.

Now, both **Preacher** and **Outcast** had an existing fanbase who were hopeful that the original source material would be honoured when brought to the small screen, but **Voltron: Legendary Defender** was another beast that had an existing fan

base and that mixture of trepidation and hope. And luckily, this new **Voltron** series has hit all the right beats since the entire first season dropped on Netflix recently. In fact, you'll do well to find somebody who *doesn't* like **Legendary Defender**, such is its strong structure, fun nature and actually tight storytelling. But that's not the only great animated affair currently providing entertainment to many on Netflix, for **BoJack Horseman** has recently returned with his third season. Sure, it may not get all that much attention from **STARBURST** a lot of the time, but what's not to love about an alcoholic man-child horse who used to be big in the '90s and who's struggling to get a handle on life after his stint with fame? As somebody who loves a good whiskey, still champions the good ol' days of Indie Britpop and far too frequently enjoys a pair of cord flares, I'm more than down with the Horseman. Granted, **BoJack Horseman** is a series whose premise is an attention grabber, but this is a show that has genuinely progressed and evolved over its three seasons. From initially being a tad gimmicky and snarky for the sake of being snarky, **BoJack**'s second season saw the show take on a slightly more serious tone at times, and that's something that's continued with a third season that has seen the show hit new heights altogether in terms of standards, tone and the overall progressive nature of the series.

Whilst so much of this column to date this month has been me gushing over various shows, there's still something that doesn't sit well with me lately. Sure, it may not be a TV show as such, but it's a straight-to-TV affair. Yes, I'm talking about the latest in the **Sharknado** series, **Sharknado 4: The Fourth Awakens**. As someone who reviewed the first two **Sharknado** movies for this fine publication – not to mention having a huge soft spot for any and all shark movies and having penned a shark-centric feature for **STARBURST** #393 – I'm still prepared to try and enjoy the **Sharknado** movies for what they're intended to be: over-the-top, camp, cheesy fun that's nothing at all to be taken seriously. However, **The Fourth Awakens**

was another step too far into murky waters for a franchise that jumped the shark a couple of films back. The first **Sharknado** was novel and, dare I say it, in the ever-famed so-bad-it's-good bracket. That was just about passable as a one-off and as something to just take for what it was. Since then, though, the franchise has just become painfully awful with each and every passing entry, culminating in the turd-fest that was **Sharknado 4** recently. This is a film for which there is literally no single positive to be taken from... well, apart from briefly seeing WWE superstar Seth Rollins in a small cameo role, but that's merely because I'm a wrestling nerd. The action largely takes place in Los Angeles and boasts a subplot that's seen some clever device having managed to put a stop to **Sharknado** activity for five years. Of course, everything goes tits up once more and the shit hits the fan. And by shit, I mean Tara Reid's performance. We get it – at first, the notion of **Sharknado** was one we all had a good chortle over – but just please let this franchise die an immediate death and stay away from our TV screens.

From one franchise that has jumped the shark to another: **Scream: The TV Series**, whilst not having gotten close to the barrel-scraping levels of the **Sharknado** series, is something else that has maybe reached the point of no return. Clearly, Wes Craven's **Scream** movie trilogy is the stuff of legend, with the initial 1996 film changing the horror game and making waves not seen for a decade or more at that time, but **Scream 4** and MTV's **Scream: The TV Series** have slowly seen the franchise fall into dodgy territory. The fourth **Scream** movie and the first season of **Scream: The TV Series** tested the patience of many horror fans, but the second season of the TV show, which is currently dropping weekly new episodes on Netflix, has just veered too much into the realm of bland and boring viewing. Even if the series is still doing its best to throw curveballs and drop in twists and turns along the way, each passing episode seems to confirm the notion that



BOJACK HORSEMAN

ALSO SCREENING

**FEAR THE WALKING DEAD - S2**

The second half of the second season of AMC's **The Walking Dead** companion show is almost upon us. Is the series as good as its more famous sibling? No, not even close. Is it an enjoyable show that loves to throw a curveball at its audience and its key characters? Hell yes. If the second half of Season 2 is to follow the pattern of the show's first season, all bets are off and no punches will be pulled.

From August 22nd on AMC Global.

THE STRAIN - S3

Originally supposed to return in August, the third season of the fan favourite Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan-created horror series is finally set to arrive in the UK. Expect more scares, more terror, more tension, and plenty of edge-of-your-seat action.

From September 9th on W

AMERICAN HORROR STORY - S6

Whilst **AHS**'s new season is imminent, we surprisingly know very little about what lies ahead for Ryan Murphy's creepy series when it does return. In fact, there's been literally no plot details made public at this stage, with merely uber-brief teasers the only thing to be seen for Season 6. Given how the series has previously brought out gimps, killer clowns, voodoo magic, and dildo monsters, we're all anxiously awaiting what tormented, twisted viewing experience lies ahead.

From September on FOX

Scream: The TV Series should've been capped at just the one season. Could the series turn things around? Sure. Is there a need to see more of it? Quite frankly, no. Rarely can the end of a season come quick enough, but Season 2 of **Scream** can't end soon enough. All we can hope then is that Ghostface really does bid us a final farewell this time. And the thing is, I absolutely adore the **Scream** franchise and even have a penchant for cheesy TV fodder that often walks the line of being so-bad-it's-good. But with **Scream: The TV Series**, it's just too glossy, too stylised, a little too tongue-in-cheek, and has reached the point where it's a hollow, sad shell of what the franchise was and should be thought of as. All we're currently left with is a piss poor TV series that's tarnishing the legacy and name of one of modern horror's most beloved and influential franchises. Then again, maybe the rest of Season 2 will magically turn things around and I'll be championing a third season of the show. Maybe. Maybe not, though. Of course, it could be that **Scream: The TV Series** is suffering from the exceptionally high standards that we've seen from recent horror-centric shows. Regardless, just because everyone else is doing things really, really well doesn't mean you have an excuse to shrug your shoulders and blame the competition's raising of the bar for your own shortcomings. Just look at A&E's ill-fated **Damien**, which is another show that did its best to make a name for itself based on milking an already long-established horror franchise. Unfortunately the Bradley James-starring **The Omen**-based series, was so, so bad that it was canned before its first season even came to a close. **Scream: The TV Series** isn't that bad, but it certainly needs a kick in the right direction if Season 2 is to recapture the charm and terror of what something with the **Scream** moniker attached to it should be about. As mentioned, though, maybe it's just time for Ghostface to put

down the knife, stop targeting the teens of Woodsboro, and let the franchise rest in peace once and for all before the reputation of Wes Craven's original films is further damaged. And hell, we love Wes Craven, but he even did his best to put the boots to the franchise himself with **Scream 4**. Let's not continue to kick a property when it's down, though.

With that, it seems like the right time to bring this latest edition of **Paul Mount's TV Zone** to a close. Safe to say, this past month or so has seen us largely spoilt with the TV output that is out there, and that's without even mentioning the return of **Mr. Robot** (what can I say, I've only had chance to see the first episode of Season 2 so far – although I did hugely enjoy it!). The landscape of television really hasn't been this great for a long, long time, although we're now entering that time of the year where we're a little in limbo; **Game of Thrones** isn't back until next summer; **The Walking Dead** is still a few months away from returning; **Preacher**'s first season has finished; by the time you read this, **Outcast**'s first season will have concluded; efforts like **Gotham**, **Lucifer**, **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** and **Marvel's Luke Cage** are within touching distance but not quite with us yet; and The CW's DC-driven superhero shows aren't back on our screens until October. I guess we can always rewatch **Stranger Things** once more...

I believe you may be stuck with me for another month or so before Paul Mount makes his triumphant return to the feature that carries his name – and let's face it, it can't be anything *but* triumphant when I've lowered the standards of this fine column so much. So for this month I bid you adieu, and hopefully I won't have trashed the place too much by the time Mountie gets back! +

Contact me via the magic of email at andrew.pollard@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thing @culturedleftpeg.



SCREAM: THE TV SERIES

it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE



The Cast of Star Trek Beyond Unenthusiastically Attempt To Find Their Inner Spock

Star Trek has rarely had a smooth run of success in its movie incarnation. I have never hidden the fact that personally, I find the format far more suited to episodic television. A format that still works within the modern arc-driven vogue of television. **Deep Space Nine** managed to carry off a seven-year space saga, many years before appetites changed, and the modern audience gained a taste for an ongoing narrative, with satisfying character growth. It's harder to carry this off at the cinema. There simply isn't the time to pull off that level of subtle change over time. You have two hours, and with the current lack of patience out there, action is required throughout, otherwise the majority of boneheads will regress to pissing about with their smartphones.

The original movies were very hit and miss, leading to the overused (and eye roll-inducing) gag about the decent ones being even-numbered. After the J. J. Abrams injection of hyperactivity and frenzied pacing, these films may now seem slow, the acting not always up to scratch. An 18-year-old moviegoer might balk at the pacing of even the comedic **Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home**, but they did have one advantage: a backlog of character development that connected you to the people and the ship called Enterprise. **Star Trek: The Motion Picture**

may have been an inappropriate attempt to fuse **Trek** with hard sci-fi, but it had three previous lengthy seasons (and the animated one), which had already given us that connection. When Kirk's son David was introduced in **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan**, it mattered as we already felt we knew Kirk, and this development felt seismic. Many also wet their Trekkie pants when Spock died for exactly the same reason. When the Enterprise was destroyed in **Star Trek III: The Search for Spock**, our jaws dropped, as by that point we had known this iconic vessel for nearly twenty years.

Although less successful, the **Next Generation** crew also squeezed out four movies (including **Star Trek: First Contact**, which I enjoyed as the first **Trek** action movie). These had a whopping seven seasons, and 178 episodes of character development to prop them up. Again, when Riker and Picard are wandering amongst the wreckage of the Enterprise-D in **Star Trek: Generations**, there was a sense of sadness due to the investment made previously by following the TV series. Before the Abrams reboot, the movies were another chance to hang out with old friends and have some more adventures. This obviously made them a little self-indulgent at times, and non-fans found them far less accessible than someone that privately self-pleasured themselves in a Starfleet uniform.

The reboot in 2009 was an epic task, and J. J. Abrams did manage to create a movie that stood alone, entertained, and the new **Star Trek** felt like an updated version of the original TV series. It was an action movie, and the excellent cast managed to do sound bite copies of the originals (Karl Urban seemingly channeled the ghost of DeForest Kelley). This modern **Trek** was visceral, exciting, and felt like a **Star Trek** theme park ride. Then they went and totally screwed the pooch with the follow-up **Star Trek Into Darkness** (seriously hoping these strange title formats do NOT catch on).

Star Trek Into Darkness is probably the worst ever **Trek** movie. The vulnerability of the Enterprise in this flick makes you wonder why anyone would ever risk stepping onboard a vessel that ruptures like a tin can, spewing hundreds of corpses into space with every shot that is fired at it. It was a sexist mess that interfered with the memory of the fan favourite **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan** in a way that a necrophiliac would be proud of. Roberto Orci seriously misjudged everything with this sad affair.

By comparison, **Star Trek Beyond** is a masterpiece. Not as good as the first movie, but at least it is enjoyable. Sadly, it does further enforce my views that the Abrams **Trek** Movies are more akin to theme park rides, and really bring nothing new to the mythos. Wisely, they went with Simon Pegg to write some levity into proceedings and got Justin Lin to bring his **Fast and Furious** aesthetic into play and embrace the status of these flicks as action blockbusters. It has to be said that Justin Lin does manage to keep the feel of the first movie, merely streamlining some of the less necessary pandering to the hardcore fans. Lin also brings that sense of family to the crew that permeates the **Fast and Furious** franchise, which is a nice fit.

If you love this version of **Star Trek**, there is plenty to enjoy. The cast again are fantastic. Once more, Karl Urban steals the show, and the scripting of Simon Pegg manages to nail the Spock and Bones double act that worked so well in the original series (although there may be one too many *bro* moments). The criticisms of sexism from the previous movie have clearly been listened to. You



The Enterprise - Greatest Hits

will be pleased to hear that no one strips down to their underwear for no apparent reason, and Zoe Saldana is back to being the strong and confident, kick-ass Uhura from the first movie. New addition Jaylah, boldly played by Sofia Boutella, looks great with her high-contrast facial art. A character design straight from **Star Wars** (and I mean that as a compliment!). The fact that this entry does focus on the whole ensemble cast does elevate it substantially above its predecessor. So far so good? To a degree, but you did know I was still going to stick the boot in at some point, right?

There are still some massive problems with this approach of bolting on a blockbuster template onto traditional **Trek**, and this reboot suffers from the effects of a *Swiss cheese* saga, which has plagued revamped franchises in an attempt to sell themselves to an impatient, smartphone-hugging generation of casual cinemagoers. The Holy Nolan gave us a trilogy of Batman movies that started with an origin with **Batman Begins**, and followed straight on with **The Dark Knight**, at the end of which he retired. The next entry, **The Dark Knight Rises** started with Batman not having been seen for eight years, and a physically burnt out shell of a man, who returns for one last battle. That was the saga? Where was the meat? The career we watched jumped straight from the origin story to the end. If he had any other adventures, they were off-screen at some point. Is the modern audience really in that much of a rush? If so, then maybe less origin and more narrative is in order.

Modern Bond is much the same. **Casino**

overrated **Skyfall** (a Bond movie in which he fails at every single objective that he is given!) we catch up with Bond as a burnt-out wreck. Any version of Bond at his peak obviously left to our imagination, as we chase to the end as fast as possible. Finally, with a new M, Q, and Moneypenny in situ we are treated to his final mission (we think), in **SPECTRE**, at the end of which he retires. With this type of approach Cubby Broccoli would have probably filmed **Dr No**, then **Thunderball**, and ended a trilogy with **On Her Majesty's Secret Service**. Modern filmmaking is constantly in a rush. It constantly feels nervous about keeping the interest of its audience.

Star Trek Beyond adopts this *Swiss cheese* approach to perfection. In **Star Trek**, we have the previously untold origin of Kirk, and how the original crew of the Enterprise came together, ending with them seemingly going off on the five-year mission we saw featured in the TV series. Then **Star Trek Into Darkness** immediately sees Kirk have the ship taken from him. There is a shite remake of a far superior film. Then Kirk & Co. head off on the five-year mission to explore the universe AGAIN. Now **Star Trek Beyond** begins with him (surprise, surprise) being a bit burnt-out, three years into the five-year mission that we can probably read about eventually in some fanboy-pleasing novel, with both him and Spock wanting to leave (and yes, we smiled at the Kirk line about everything becoming *episodic*). So far we have had an origin story, a crap remake involving an extension of the origin story, and now we have skipped to the end. Where are the actual adventures of James T. Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise? Stories that we are led to believe are going

Royale took its time to tell a nicely paced origin. For the first time, we got to see him begin his career as the superspy that helped define our entire genre. Then with the follow-up **Quantum of Solace**, in an approach mirroring Nolan's Bat trilogy, we carry on straight after the last movie and get an extension to his first mission. A kind of **Casino Royale 2**. Then with the vastly

to be the stuff of legends? Well, with the modern approach to movie making we are just going to have to have active imaginations, as the creatives behind these franchises merely rush us through the bullet points. Origin to finish in three or four movies, with no actual period where the characters we are encouraged to invest in are actually at their peak and kicking ass. The big stories are simply left off screen; that way no one has to be talented enough to write them.

Now we get to the big problem I have had from the very beginning of this iteration of **Trek**. I get the amped-up aesthetic. I get that everything has to be turned up to eleven, with everyone running down corridors followed by steadicams. But in an attempt to bombard us with constant destruction, they have made this version of the Enterprise the least impressive to date. Every time someone fires on her, it is a direct hit that blows the shit out of her. In the first movie it was bad, but in **Star Trek Into Darkness**, it was blown to shreds, with hundreds of bodies routinely sucked out of the ruptures to die horribly in space. It barely survived two movies, and they just had to blow it up completely in **Star Trek Beyond**. A loss that is not really very effective for all of the reasons that I explained earlier. There was no lump in the throat when it happened, just a constant scanning of the screen to keep up with all of the various parts of the ship tearing off into pieces. This constant bombardment of visuals felt like an attempt to make you surrender any notions of reason and common sense to the carnal pleasures of dumb fun. Just before the ship is destroyed, it was announced that the shields were down. It had shields? That was the biggest shock in this rebooted franchise so far!

Other whines include the opening with Kirk fighting **Galaxy Quest** monsters. Another rubbish bad guy. Zero character development whatsoever - Kirk and Spock want to leave, then they want to stay, end of movie. The end is ripped straight from **Mars Attacks** - it isn't even subtle about it. The mid-section was also a little slow for this action movie motif and briefly started to sag a little. The rest would be nit-picking.

Despite the scale and bombast of the visuals, for some reason, this entry lacks the swashbuckling sense of adventure that the first movie had in droves. **Star Trek Beyond** fails to actually go beyond anything, but I suppose the title **Star Trek Comfort Zone** just doesn't cut it in this *Swiss cheese* world.



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